

THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

As Exemplified in the Writings of

Jacques Maritain

and

Reinhold Niebuhr

by

William Earl Tyree.

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PREFACE

There is no such thing as presuppositionless thinking. I cannot, therefore, pretend that in this thesis on the Christian interpretation of history, I am to be, in such a sense, objective. I write as a professing Christian, and further, as one who stands generally on the biblical-dialectical rather than the aristotelian-thomist side of the great theological debate.

There are of course kinds and degrees of objectivity and detachment. In the natural sciences, the self with its proximate interests and ultimate concern is only indirectly involved. This is by no means to say that one can work in this area without presuppositions and commitments - presuppositions and commitments which are themselves incapable of absolute theoretical justification. The natural scientist must, for instance, believe in truth in some sense and be persuaded that it can be achieved by scientific method. The real problem is not, however, that the self should be involved, but rather that it tends to insinuate its interests and conclusions in a way that corrupts. This is true even in the natural sciences, though in a minimal way. It is even more true of other inquiry, particularly true perhaps of the interpretation of history, where the question of meaning as such is directly confronted. It is therefore necessary here to be especially vigilant against wishful or dogmatic thinking that tries to make reality conform to predilection. Yet, it is as right as it is inevitable that the self should be concerned, for to understand means to stand under. The scientist cannot work by standing outside the spirit and method of science, and the philosopher cannot really philosophize non-existentially. It is

not only trite, it is true to say that we are not spectators of life but participants in it. Any "objectivity" that rests upon obscuring the basic fact of the human situation is a dishonest pretension. And it can lead only to bad philosophy.

Now the question might be asked: "What, in this existential view, can 'bad' philosophy mean except that one rejects it? Are not the terms 'good' and 'bad' relative?" Yes and No. Yes, in the sense that any human judgment of value is made from a limited perspective and not from the absolute perspective of God; truth, beauty and good are always, for me, my truth, my beauty, my good. No, in the sense that my judgments about these things may, nay must in some way, lay hold on truth, beauty, and the good - on God Himself.

My view is, then, in other words, that the historical always contains but never exhausts, always expresses but also always contradicts, the divine. This conviction is the basic presupposition with which I come to the writing of the thesis.

INTRODUCTORY

Background of the Thesis Subject.

The interpretation of history might be described as a Syriac phenomenon¹ which attained its highest expression in Christianity. There have, to be sure, been reflections on life in every civilization, and in so far as the meaning of history participates in the meaning of life these reflections have concerned history at least implicitly. But for the sense of history as such - the notion of a movement of man and society through time, possessing positive, cumulative, and permanent significance - it is necessary, I think, to go to the Syrian-Christian tradition.

A. Alternatives to the Christian interpretation of history.

Before entering upon the exposition of the Christian interpretation, I propose to say a few words by way of characterization of two alternative points of view, one being exemplified in the dominant thought of the oriental and hellenic worlds, the other in liberalism and marxism. I do this because the distinctiveness of the Christian perspective will be more apparent against such a background.

1. Simple negation of history: oriental and hellenic.

A distinguishing feature of the oriental² and the hellenic³ tradition and a common element between them is the depreciation of history. Whether we consult the Buddha and his Wheel of Existence and the ascetic discipline by which escape is made into the oblivion of Nirvana, or remember Plato's cycles, or Horace's verse "Damnosa quid non imminuit dies" - Time

¹ See John MacMurray's The Clue to History.

² i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism.

³ i.e., Parmenides, Plato, Neo-Platonism and to a lesser degree Aristotle.

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depreciates the value of the world" -, we find essentially the same spirit. This spirit is one of contempt for particularity as against undifferentiated being, of change as against permanence, a losing of the finite in the infinite, a negation of history.

2. Simple affirmation of history: liberal and marxian.

In the most complete contrast is the unqualified affirmation of history found in liberalism and marxism. These two differ from one another in important respects; but they are one in believing that there are not two cities but one, and that the city of this world is its own redeemer.

Liberalism believes that history is gradually fulfilling the meaning of life. The particular form of this confidence has varied. For Smith and Bentham it was rooted in a pre-established harmony. For August Comte it was belief in the possibility of extending the natural goodness of parental affection through rational discipline.² For Herbert Spencer change itself was progress. For Hegel, history was the self-realization of absolute spirit, "the development of Spirit in Time, as Nature is the development of the Idea in Space".³ But whatever the specific form, the conviction of a gradual development is the mark of liberalism.

Marxism shares this optimistic mood, but substitutes a revolutionary for a gradualist method. It too believes in an historical fulfilment, not however at the end of a gradual process but on the other side of proletarian revolution. The occasion for revolution is given in the presence of evil in history that cannot be extirpated by mere persuasion or tinkering. The evil is the division of labour with resulting private property and

1 Quoted by J.B. Bury - The Idea of Progress, p. 11-12.

2 See for instance A General View of Positivism, p. 102; quoted by Niebuhr, HUMAN NATURE, p. 108.

3 The Philosophy of History, p. 72.

cleavage of classes. The work of the revolution is to destroy this evil and to build a new classless society. If one asks why, since "the history¹ of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles", the coming conflict between the proletariat and the owning class should be the final conflict, or why the historical dialectic should stop in a socialist organization of society, the answer is no more clear than the answer to the question as to why the hegelian dialectic should stop in the Germanic world. But be that as it may, the central conviction of marxism is that, on the other side of proletarian revolution, there will be perfect justice and peace.

In both marxism and liberalism, then, there is a losing of the infinite in the finite, an unqualified affirmation of history.

B. 1. The distinctive Christian perspective.

Christianity both differs from and agrees with these other views. It stands between but beyond anotherworldliness which finds no significance in history, and a utopianism which expects the fulfilment of life in history. For it holds that history, though a realm of meaning, is not the realm of completed meaning, which is only at the end of history in the Kingdom of God.

2. Differing versions within the church.

This notion of history is the distinctive one that is common to all Christians. It is when more specific content is introduced that differences arise. Here we may distinguish and briefly characterize five points of view.

There is the fundamentalist position. It is marked by a literalistic view of biblical revelation, which tends to become an interpretation

1 From the opening of The Communist Manifesto.

of past and present and a prophecy of the future (including often the imminent end of the world) on the basis of arbitrary manipulation of selected passages of scripture. We note it here, not for its theological excellence, but because of its acceptance by a considerable portion of the untutored mass of the Church.

The liberal point of view stems in part from the pelagian-socinian-sanctificationist side of Christian tradition and in part from the mood of progress so characteristic of the modern period. It sees man working gradually, through rational freedom by God's grace, to solve his problems, and, though it looks beyond history for life's final fulfilment, inclines to over-estimate historical possibilities.

Barthianism, on the other hand, under-estimates the possibilities of history. In reaction against the excessive optimism of liberal Christianity and its compromises, Barth^{has} thundered that every moment of existence is a crisis of sinful man before holy God, a moment in which judgment and mercy, Yes and No, are pronounced. Here Barth is dialectical. But he is not dialectical when, to the whole natural activity of man and to the point of contact for God's revelation in Christ, he says simply "Nein!"¹ Thus Barth, and others in so far as they agree with him, describe the relation of Christianity to culture as one of discontinuity, and think of life's fulfilment almost wholly in terms of the Kingdom of God beyond history.

Thomism is the synthesis of aristotelianism and augustinianism wrought by St. Thomas Aquinas. Neo-thomism is the twentieth century movement which derives its inspiration and determinative principles from this

1 See Barth's essay on Natural Theology.

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system and seeks to relate it to the contemporary situation. It is characterized by its emphasis upon the continuity between the historical and the eternal, particularly within the Church. Maritain and Gilson are perhaps to-day its chief spokesmen.

Finally there is the dialectical position. A few words concerning this term "dialectical" are necessary. In the most general sense, dialectic refers to "pro" and "con" discussion. Hegel (somewhat anticipated by Heraclitus) gave it his own meaning. He meant by it a logic of thesis-antithesis-synthesis which grasps truth. Kierkegaard regarded this as a rationalistic pretension, denied the possibility of synthesis, and maintained that the best man can do^{is} to set up a thesis and an antithesis which do not contain truth but only point to truth that cannot be contained. This is to speak in epistemological terms. Its theological equivalent is a God who is both continuous and discontinuous with man. On this view there is a religious basis for culture, yet also a point of transcendence from which to criticize and set a limit to all claims on behalf of historical achievement and cultural forms. It is a Kierkegaardian dialectic, more particularly as understood by Reinhold Niebuhr, that I shall have in mind in this thesis when the term "dialectic" is used.

C. Choice of the latter two for treatment.

I have not chosen to expound the fundamentalist position because of its crudity of form. Nor has the liberal interpretation as such interested me, primarily because some of its characteristic notes make so little sense

1 We shall henceforth use only the term "thomism", as Maritain often expresses his preference for it.

either in terms of my personal experience of evil or the public manifestation of it in our time. Yet Barth, who realises so profoundly the depth and final recalcitrance of historical evil, is not compelling to me because he denies what seems the obvious creativity of natural man and the significant possibilities of history. Thomism is like liberalism in affirming these possibilities and in assuming the historical task, but it has more adequate philosophical and theological foundations. Regarding it as the most significant alternative to the dialectical position, I have chosen to expound it, (in the person of Jacques Maritain). And I treat the dialectical view itself (as found in Reinhold Niebuhr) because, as I have already suggested, I think it the most valid, the most true to biblical Christianity, and the most adequate to the need of our age, which desperately requires both a challenging of idolatry and a religious foundation for culture.

D. The Organization of the Thesis.

I should perhaps conclude these brief introductory words by a statement about the organization of this thesis. Chapters I and II will expound the basic principles of Maritain and of Niebuhr, respectively, without critical comment. Chapter III will join the debate between them, at the same time further elaborating the two views of man and historical movement in terms of the problem of the truth, the problem of the good, and the problem of the kingdom, - with critical evaluation both implicit and explicit.

CHAPTER I.

Jacques Maritain

A. Introduction.

1. The "philosophy of History" and the "wisdom of history".

To say, as M. Maritain does, that "it is properly a prophetic¹ work to deliver to men the philosophy of their history", is to define by implication at once the character of history and the peculiar nature of the problem involved in interpreting it. For history, having its source, meaning, and destiny beyond itself, requires illumination that comes in some sense from beyond itself, if it is to be understood.

Admitting the necessity of revelation and of the wisdom springing from it in the task of historical interpretation is not, however, to deny therein the role of reason. Indeed, since for Maritain and thomism² "being as such is intelligible" (though not wholly so to us and to our intellect) human reason is able to know proximate causes in the created world, where history occurs, and through these proximate causes to mount to the First Cause itself. Thus reason is able to lay certain metaphysical foundations for historical interpretation.

Thomism is a philosophy of being, and not a philosophy of either pure becoming or of pure being. As such it established the very possibility of history. Its character as a philosophy of being depends upon Aristotle's solution of the argument between two great thinkers of the ancient world. Heraclitus had held that reality is becoming, that change alone is real, while Parmenides had taught that only being, - the one,

¹ Three Reformers, p. 93

² Introduction to Philosophy, p. 140.

eternal and unchangeable, - is real. Aristotle sought to show that both are real and to refute the element of error in each of these other views by reference to the principle of identity or non-contradiction. Against Heraclitus, he maintained that change itself presupposes something which changes, that movement presupposes a mover and thus the reality of being. Against Parmenides, he argued that to deny the fact of change is to deny the dependability of our senses and intellect which testify to it. In thus discerning the reality of both being and change, Aristotle established the fundamental ontological presupposition of history. Heraclitian change on the other hand precludes it (history), since pure change would lack any orientation or principle of unity, while parmenidian being has the same consequence, since pure being, lacking nothing, could have no movement.

It is instructive to reflect that while Aristotle did establish the basic metaphysical foundation of history, he did not develop the notion or even possess the sense of history itself.¹ This is a striking symbol of both the possibilities and the limits of reason. It shows what reason is capable of; but it also indicates what is beyond its scope and what therefore depends upon revelation. Hence not Aristotle, but "St. Augustine (basing himself on the Bible) created the philosophy of history, or let us say more exactly, (for the illuminations of faith are here necessary) the

1 Did he not think of history as moving cyclicly, and did he not say: "What is best for all men and women is not to be born, and after that, the chief of other possible goods, but the second of goods, is, having been born, to die as soon as may be.."? Fragment of Eudemian Dialogue in Plutarch: Consolatio ad Apollonian. Quoted by N. A. M. in Three Reformers, p. 117.

wisdom of history".¹ And thus, though reason has its part to play, "it is properly a prophetic work to deliver to men the philosophy of their history".

First of all, it is necessary to speak further of those metaphysical principles and presuppositions of history which reason can supply, and which we shall be using directly or indirectly throughout the discussion of Maritain. We shall now elaborate the thomist idea of being from the three standpoints of intelligibility, of existence, and of action.

2. The ontological presuppositions of history: intelligibility.

In considering being from the standpoint of intelligibility, Maritain makes a distinction between "ideas (as) the internal likenesses of things by which the latter are presented in such a way that we can reason about them (and thus acquire knowledge)" and "images" (as) "the internal likenesses of things by which the latter are presented to us as our sensations have first made them known to us".² And he shows that, whereas an image of a man is of a particular man, an idea leaves out of account the individual characteristics and concerns only man as such - non-individual, abstract and universal. Thus we come directly to the vital issue of the universal and the particular.

To designate what a thing is primarily as intelligible, Maritain uses the term essence (essentia). For, since being as such is intelligible and the intellect is modelled on being, it follows that what a thing is primarily for the intellect is what is most important about it. Now it

1 The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 178.

2 An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 117.

is the essence (of corporeal things, not immaterial things or pure spirits which we know by analogy and not in their essence),¹ that the mind extracts or abstracts from things. This essence is interpreted as universal² in the mind, as individualized in reality. For instance, there is such a thing as human nature; it exists as a universal in the mind abstracted from individual men but is present outside the mind, in reality, only in this or that particular man. Such an interpretation of the particular and the universal Maritain puts forward as alone able to account for our knowledge, given the fact that on the one hand real facts are singular and on the other that our ideas can directly present only the universal. Nominalism, which affirms that universals have no existence outside the mind, denies the possibility of intellectual knowledge; while absolute realism (or idealism), which asserts that the reality of things is thought-universals, denies sensory knowledge and particularity.

In saying that essence exists as a universal only in the intellect which extracts or abstracts it from things in which it exists individualized (essence as such being neither universal nor individual), it is implied of course that there is more in a thing than the intellect extracts as a universal. "More" in what sense? Certainly not in the sense of more to be known, for being in thomist thought is co-extensive with intelligibility. Rather, "more" in the sense of the principles of its individuality, which do not enter into the essence. How is this?

Though there are universals which constitute the essence of and

1 Ibid, p. 121.

2 Ibid, p. 120.

the sameness in a multitude of individuals, there are also individuals which differ from one another. Thus, for instance, both John and James are men, but they differ in various ways. These differences cannot be derived from the essence, which, by definition, is the same in each. Yet the differences are unalterable and necessary to both. Thus there are principles of individuality; and according to thomism, they have their ground in what Aristotle called first matter, something¹ of itself wholly indeterminate, but subject to determination by force, a species of non-being, "something which can enter into the constitution of a being but is not itself a being".

Now the intellect does not grasp things in their material individuality. But it is not by that fact frustrated, for it does obtain its formal object, namely, being in its intelligibility, or as essence. This means that our knowledge, though imperfect, is still trustworthy and useful.

It must be emphasised that the thomist view of the universal and the particular includes both in the real. "The truth of the matter is..... that there exists in everything an intelligible and immaterial element, which Aristotle calls form, in virtue of which it possesses a specific nature or essence. But this principle is not separate from things; it inheres in them as one of the factors which constitute their substance. Thus individual objects, though mutable and mortal, are no longer deceptive shadows; they are reality".² When Maritain says this,

1 Ibid, pp.119-121.

2 Ibid, p. 63.

he establishes the basis for the affirmation of the significance of history.

3. The ontological presuppositions of history: existence.

We move on to a consideration of being in reference to existence.¹ Maritain defines existence as "act of being". It transcends pure essence, for it embraces essence as actualised under the conditions of materiality. What the intellect apprehends, then, from the standpoint of existence, is the individual thing. And the nature of essence of an individual thing, considered as the subject of action, is that in virtue of which the thing has existence. Thus substance is defined as "a thing or nature whose property is to exist by itself and not in another thing".² Since substance is the principle of a thing's actuality, it follows that so long as a thing exists its substance is immutable.

There are, however, aspects of individual things which change and which therefore are not of the substance. Such are called "contingent accidents". There are other aspects of things which do not change, and without which a subject of action cannot exist, - additional beings which complete the substance (such as the understanding and the will) - but which cannot themselves be substance, as we possess a distinct notion of them wholly extrinsic to that of substance (and this would be impossible if they were not in fact distinct). These are called "necessary accidents".³

An individual thus possesses what are called substance and

1 Ibid, p. 165.

2 Ibid, p. 164.

3 See An Introduction to Philosophy, pp.172-173.

accident. Our intellect is aware that an individual thing exists by means of sensations and images. What that is in virtue of which it has existence, that is, what is the substance of its individuality, can be known directly only by an abstraction from the accidents in a universal idea. This is the thomist view. The substantialists on the other hand deny the existence of real accidents really distinct from substance, while the phenomenologists say there is no substance. But these simply repeat in another mode the respective errors, already noted, of Parmenides and Heraclitus with regard to being and change, and by the absolute realists and nominalists on the problem of universals. They fail to give an adequate answer to the question of how a variable and contingent object can give rise to a stable knowledge. Thomism, however, in distinguishing between the thing (accidents) with which knowledge is occupied and the object (substance) on which it is based is able to answer the question. It is so, because contingency depends on the singular and the materially individuated, while knowledge is based on universal natures in the singular and the contingent.

To recognise that essence is not existence is to grasp the very possibility of history: "The world of existence in act and of concrete reality is not the world of pure intelligible necessities... Every existing thing has its nature or essence, but the existential position of things is not implied by their nature... Existent reality is thus composed of nature and the adventitious: that is why there is a meaning¹ in time and its duration constitutes (irreversible) history..." Thus

1 The Degrees of Knowledge, pp.33-34.

the possibility of freedom is implicit in the distinction between essence and existence. To say there is natural determinism is only to say, therefore, that every cause, taken abstractly in its universal nature, is determined to an effect (which can in fact be lacking if the cause is not posited or other causes intervene) and not that there is a universal determinism of nature. Thus Maritain declares that "the aristotelian-thomist conception... by showing how in the course of singular events contingency is reconciled with the necessity of scientific laws, enables us to see how it is possible to integrate into nature the liberty which is proper to spirits, which as such do not make part of the sensible and corporeal world, but which nevertheless have in that world their field of¹ action".

4. The ontological presuppositions of history: action.

We shall, finally, consider being under a third aspect, that of action.

The first datum of experience about the behaviour of things is that they change. And since there can be no change without a subject of change, being is prior to change.² The basic question is, as Maritain formulates it, as to how the starting-point of change can become its goal. Bearing in mind the principle of identity or non-contradiction, it is evident that this question can neither be answered by "being", which is already everything that it is, nor by "not-being", which is nothing. The answer lies rather in the sui generis concept of power of being or potentiality; for,

¹ Ibid, p. 38.

² See note in An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 189.

though the starting-point of change is everything which it is, it is not yet all it can be. Change therefore is transition from potentiality¹ to act.

There are two kinds of being: determinate being which is called act, and indeterminate being which is called potentiality. God alone is the fulness of being or pure act. All else is a compound of act and potentiality. The substance of corporeal things is a union of a purely potential principle or first matter, and an actual principle or form. This union is the subject of substantial changes. Between God or pure act which is unchanging and the world which is changing, there is an² absolute and infinite difference.

The distinctiveness of the thomist conception of being as act and potentiality may once again be suggested by setting it against its alternatives. Exaggerated intellectualism and anti-intellectualism (to use Maritain's terms) alike end in confusing God and the world, - the former by denying potentiality, the latter by denying act. It is only on the basis of the distinction within being between act and potentiality that either the majesty of the Creator God, or the derived and developing character of the world, man and history, can be understood and defended.

5. The wisdom of history, and personality.

We have now recorded and elaborated in terms of being considered from the three standpoints of intelligibility, existence and action, the thomist conviction that the so-called natural reason can discover by an

1 ~~ibid.~~ See Note in An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 189.

2 For foregoing, see Introduction to Philosophy, pp. 181-190.

analysis of being the possibility and ground of history. When, however, we turn to the question of historical meaning itself, we are told that revelation and the wisdom of faith based upon it are indispensable. Why is this?

The answer in a word is that "the three divine persons are the¹ supreme object of man's fruition", and that, as this is a question of entering into the depths of God, it is not possible by reason which can merely observe the behaviour of God as cause of the world, but only by His disclosing Himself to us as He is in Himself and in His purpose for us, and by raising us to connaturality with Himself, - by sanctifying grace and charity here below, by the beatific vision above.

The theoretical principle, which declares that while reason can lay the foundation for historical interpretation the structure cannot be completed without revelation and faith, seems to Maritain validated by experience as well as logically cogent. For, as we remarked at the beginning, it was not in fact Aristotle or any human wisdom but men of faith within the biblical tradition who grasped history as such. It was they who attained to the full notion of both divine personality and human personality. And "history," as Maritain says, "is an unimaginable drama of the confrontation of free personalities, of the eternal and divine personality and our own personality... dialogue... always a question of 'Thou' and 'I'".² While the wisdom of the philosophers raises a mountain of pride and tends at once to divinize and to degrade the creature,

1 Science and Wisdom, p. 18.

2 Ibid, pp. 16-17.

forgetting God, the wisdom of faith understands that "our personality exists only in humility, and is only saved by the divine personality. For the one is a personality that gives and the other a personality that is given".¹

In his view of the Christian interpretation of history, then, Maritain has recourse to both the insights of reason and the illumination of faith, the latter being understood as completing and not contradicting the former.² To the exposition of Maritain's view of history we now proceed directly.

1 Ibid. p. 16.

2 See, for instance, Science and Wisdom, p. 18: "The wisdom of this world is overcome, and subordinate to it (the wisdom of grace). And it is a conquest without loss or harm, neither for the conqueror nor for the conquered, because in ridding itself from the mixtures of syncretism and pride, the wisdom of the philosophers recovers its true nature and its own truth".

B. The Doctrine of Man.

If, as Maritain holds, the interaction of the divine and human personality is the distinctive reality of history, it must be the principal category of historical interpretation. Further, if God, lacking nothing in Himself, is not subject to change and development, whereas man is, it follows that it is man (man under God) who must be the direct object of analysis.

1. Man as a unique corporeal substance.

Man, like the world he lives in, has his origin in the creative fiat of God. His position in creation may be described as midway between pure spirits and inanimate bodies and as the highest of corporeal substances. All corporeal substances, even inanimate bodies, possess two principles, - first matter and form. The substantial form of all corporeal beings except man differs from that of pure spirits in that it cannot exist apart from matter. Man is unique in that he is a composite unity whose soul can exist apart from matter.

It is due to the presence in human beings of these two aspects - body and soul - that the study of man, anthropology, can be neither part of the philosophy of sensible nature, nor of metaphysics, which deals only with the immaterial. It is a distinct science, with its own categories, which we shall henceforth be using.

2. The individual and the person. We must consider in greater detail what has already been suggested regarding man as a unique corporeal substance, in terms now of the individual and the person.

The term individual is not of itself an anthropological category

(for thomism), but is so only in relation to person. As such it points to that in man which is not unique but common to the whole of physical creation. Individuality is based on the necessity of a physical thing's having quantity and a position in space distinct from¹ all other things. It has its ontological root in first matter (pure potentiality or an avidity for being). Insofar as man is material individuality he is subject to the determination of the physical world and like all matter tends towards decomposition. Dualistic anthropologies have always regarded this as evil, thus tending to negate history. And since Maritain himself speaks at times of material individuality as "the narrowness in being, and the grasping for oneself, which in a body animated by a spirit, derives from matter", one might imagine he regarded particularity itself as evil or the source of evil. But he denies this, explicitly declaring: "Let us note... that material individuality is not something bad in itself. No, it is something good, since it is the very condition of our existence. But it is precisely in relation to personality that individuality is good; what is bad is to let this aspect of our being predominate...".²

What should predominate is the distinctive aspect of man, personality. This is what we have heretofore called form - that "imprint of metaphysical energy which constitutes with matter a substantial unity, and which determines the latter to be that which it is".³ It is that about man

¹ Scholasticism and Politics, p. 49

² Ibid, p. 52.

³ Ibid, p. 48.

which is unique, that by which he subsists and by himself exercises existence. "Man is an individual who holds himself in¹ hand by his intelligence and will", a total being which can choose ends and means, and "introduce² a new series of events into the universe by liberty", a being who can give himself and receive other selves, even God Himself, and, "as His image...³ be elevated by grace to participate in the very life of God". Such is man in the total reaches of his personal being.

3. Intelligence, will and freedom.

If, as has been suggested, intelligence and will are the means by which man "holds himself in hand" as personality, they obviously require special attention.

Both the intellect and the will regard being and good immaterially, but they do so under different aspects. The intellect has for its object "the simple essence of the good in its intelligible constitution and in its⁴ truth". The object of the will, on the other hand, is "the desirable⁵ good itself, taken in its concrete existence". Regarded in themselves and from the standpoint of pure metaphysical hierarchies, the intellect, says Maritain, has primacy over the will, for it is more abstract and spiritual. This primacy is also shown by the fact that willing and doing proceed from the understanding; and by our relationship with God at the last, where we shall see Him in the beatific vision. Thus it is that contemplation is metaphysically superior to action. But, regarded

1 The Rights of Man, p. 6.

2 Three Reformers, p. 20.

3 Scholasticism and Politics, p. 52

4 Three Reformers, p. 38.

5 Ibid, p. 39.

from the standpoint not of themselves but in relation to the things which they may reach, the will is higher than the intellect. For the will seeks its object in its own mode of being and carries us thither, whereas the intelligence regards being as it is in the mind, drawing it into itself. Thus it is said to be better to know that which is below man, but to love Him who is above. And for this reason there is a wisdom of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the connaturality of charity higher than the distinct ideas of philosophic knowledge.

The interrelatedness of the intellect and the will is expressed¹ in the thomist definition of the will as "intellective appetite". All appetite is rooted in awareness. Sensitive appetite - desire and emotion - has its basis in the awareness of the senses, spiritual appetite in the intellect. Indeed, spiritual appetite, will, even free will, is declared to be a necessity of every intelligent nature. How is this?

The intellect is ordered on being, and since being and the good are co-extensive, the intellect has the notion of what is good as such - the metaphysically good, that is, that which would fulfil all the essential possibilities of our being.² Man, therefore, desires not merely this or that good known through the senses, but the good as such, even before knowing what it is, where to find it, or whether in fact it can be found (all this being disclosed only by revelation). Now that in man which necessarily desires and affirms the good as such is called the will. Since it necessarily desires beatitude, or is determined by absolute good, it follows

1 Scholasticism and Politics, p. 96.

2 Ibid. p. 96.

that toward everything which is not this absolute good, the will is undetermined and free, - that is, toward everything here on earth, even¹ the divine good. Thus freedom is deduced from necessity.

It thus appears paradoxically enough, that, though man necessarily desires the absolute good and loves God even more than himself, in spite of himself, he does so by a free option (here below) which he can decline. For, so long as man is on earth he does not behold God as the beatitude which beatifies him, but can only know He is the beatitude which will beatify him; hence until man does so behold Him, he is not determined by Him as such and can refuse Him. Thus, on earth man freely seeks happiness or beatitude. In Heaven he will necessarily possess it, for he will behold God face to face. The freedom man has with respect to all things which are not beatitude, grasped as actually beatifying and fulfilling all desire, Maritain calls freedom of choice. The freedom man will have perfectly in Heaven, but toward which he tends even on earth so far as he lives under grace, is not freedom of choice, but what Maritain calls freedom of spontaneity. By this he means a dependence on the divine causality alone whereby through love man rises to the fullness of his possibilities as a person. Thus freedom of choice is understood to be not an end in itself but ordained to a higher freedom. "...One chooses² finally not to have to choose".

While we have thus far noted that man has freedom of choice, we have not yet specified in what it actually consists. For Maritain,

1 Ibid. p. 96.

2 Ibid, p. 112.

freedom of choice consists "in the mastery by the will of the practical judgment which determines it".¹ The intellect, which has no direct object but the universal, is unable in itself to judge of what ought to be done in the singular and the contingent (except as it rightly orders the inclination of the will). It is the will which determines the intellect to pass from a speculative to a practical judgment and to act specifically and efficaciously. It does this by an act rising from the depth of the personality in which the will, so to speak, transfers to the particular good the power deriving from its determination to the infinite good. Maritain points to this act of will and capacity for decision as bearing "the greatest possible resemblance to the creative fiat"² and as manifesting supremely the divine image in man.

The will, then, freely choosing, determines the intellect in the order of efficient causality; but there is a co-determination, for the intellect, in supplying the notion of good as such, determines the will in the order of formal causality.

We may observe finally here that, whereas the truths of the speculative intellect consist in knowing or conforming to the thing, the truths of the practical intellect consist in guiding or conforming to the right appetite of the subject.³ This means that the practical judgment can only be valid if the appetite is right; and this depends not on knowledge as such but on the rectitude of the moral virtues;

1 Ibid, p. 100.

2 Ibid, p. 101.

3 See Three Reformers, p. 41.

this in turn, however, presupposes knowledge of ~~the basic knowledge of~~ the basic metaphysical and religious truths. Thus the relation between the intellect and the will is characterized by distinctness, and yet by interdependence.

4. Good and evil: original, fallen, and redeemed nature.

Are then the intelligence and the will the source of our good acts? Yes. We have full initiative and free choice and actually work our own good acts. But our role is a secondary one, not the primary one. That belongs to God alone. "Our good acts are thus wholly from God as primary cause, and wholly our own as due to a secondary free cause."¹ This is not qualified by a certain distinction between "operating" and "co-operating" grace. In the latter, the soul is moved while at the same time moving itself; while in operating grace the soul is moved without moving itself, as in the interior act of the will, that is to say, the first act to which the soul cannot move itself in virtue of a previous act, - for instance when the will begins to will the good, having previously willed evil. Yet even here, the soul, in being passive under the action of God, receives Him in a vital, free and meritorious way.² Thus, both divine creativity and human freedom may be affirmed as fully compatible one with the other, mutually producing good acts.

But what of evil and the source of evil?

According to thomism, "evil is mere privation of being without positive existence".³ It is the absence of good: And "we are the

1 Scholasticism and Politics, p. 103.

2 See Prayer and Intelligence, pp.53-54, Degrees of Knowledge, p. 325.

3 An Introduction to Philosophy, p.20.

(deficient) prime source";¹ "he (man) alone is responsible for the evil that he does".² How is it, then, that man, the image of God and the secondary source of his good acts, is also the sole source of evil?

It is by failure of the will. God created man in His own image, endowed him with freedom of choice. Freedom of choice in the creature presupposes the possibility of wrong choice. And this possibility became an actuality when Adam chose to eat of the tree. Through this original sin man turned from God his final end, deprived himself and the whole race of those supernatural graces and gratuitous privileges³ (innocence, integrity, inerrancy, happiness, corporeal immortality etc.) which had been given at his creation; and he initiated all that has followed by way of disruption and tragedy in the natural order and common life. By himself henceforth he⁴ was lost and could do nothing to save himself.

But for all this man's essential nature was not destroyed, or even in itself, corrupted. As we have seen, his essential nature consists in substance (or that in virtue of which he has existence), and in accidents distinct from the substance and yet indispensable to his existence, principally the intelligence and the will. Since, therefore, his essential nature is that by which he is what he is, it follows that his essential nature is indestructible so long as he exists. However sinful and wounded he may be, then, man never ceases to be man. As such he

1 The Degrees of Knowledge, p.373.

2 True Humanism, p. 4.

3 See The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 374.

4 See True Humanism, p. 4.

retains intelligence and free will and the possibility of "natural" virtue. That is to say, he is still able to attain some measure of truth; to apprehend and create beauty; to develop the virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, and to organize the community on the basis of natural law and civic friendship. For he still acts by divine grace, - not indeed by that "special presence which is peculiar to a soul in the state of grace",¹ - that grace of charity by which fallen nature is raised above itself to connaturality with God - but by that general grace and infinite effect by which "at each instant He endows us with our action and our being".²

Inasmuch, however, as we bear the burden of original sin and are dispossessed of the supernatural gifts, salvation is possible only if God acts in some further way. This He does, or will do, with the full power of primary initiative, but not by violating the free choice of man. By baptism and sanctifying grace, God, if man answer to His call, washes away original sin and restores the supernatural graces. Mortal sin,³ "the ultimate constituting form of sin" through which man turns from God the final end and loses sanctifying grace, is overcome by infused charity,⁴ "the ultimate constituting form of justification" which enables man efficaciously to choose God as his final end once more. For Maritain, it is wrong to say that salvation is attained by faith alone and by an external imputation which does not justify from within. Faith is vital

1 The Degrees of Knowledge, p.317.

2 Ibid. p.317.

3 Three Reformers, p. 203.

4 Ibid. p.203.

to salvation, and is the root and foundation of charity itself; but it must be completed by charity. For, "it is the sanctifying grace of infused charity which makes man just in the eyes of God".¹ Thus, while faith is the presupposition of saving grace, good works follow as its product and manifestation.

It is important to note carefully what baptism and sanctifying grace do and do not do, according to Maritain. They wash away original sin and restore man to connaturality with God. They do not efface concupiscence or preclude venial sin. Concupiscence, which means theologically "a general propensity to an uncontrolled love of oneself or perishable things",² is the seat of sin and it is in us even after baptism as the material element and permanent wound of original sin. Venial sins are weaknesses and impurities which do not cause man to lose grace. Thus, for thomism and Catholic theology, sin in the justified man "can be dead as to its ultimate formality (intrinsic) while continuing alive as to all the material of its dispositions and its tendencies".³ For Luther, on the other hand, who did not distinguish between mortal and venial sin, the justified man (allegedly) is formally at once just and sinful. Maritain calls this "a fantasy of incurably nominalist theology which places opposites side by side".⁴ "If", he says, "the fire of concupiscence is still there, necessitating constant vigilance, yet is man no longer rent."⁵ He is surrendered to the spirit of God".

1 Ibid, p. 201.

2 Ibid, p. 172.

3 Ibid, p. 203.

4 Ibid, p. 177.

5 Ibid, p. 115-117.

The keystone, then, of the thomist view of nature and grace, as indeed of the whole structure of thought, is "continuity". Not only¹ does "nature only act from the beginning as grace has raised it up". But fallen nature itself is continuous with redeeming grace: "The order of charity does not destroy, it confirms it; but it perfects it² supernaturally".

5. Man in society, in the temporal and spiritual orders.

What has hitherto been implicit throughout the exposition of Maritain's doctrine of man concerning his social nature must now be made explicit.

It will be recalled that a distinction is made, within the unity which is man, between the individual and the person, - the individual having its ontological root in first matter, the person in form or spiritual soul.

Now it is by virtue of the individuality of man that he is related to society as a part to a whole and that his individual good is subordinate to the social good. The classic text of this thomist principle is this: "Every individual person bears the same relationship to the whole community as the part bears to the whole"³.

Yet, by virtue of his personality man transcends society, being so orientated to the absolute and eternal that society must minister to his end. Thus St. Thomas says: "Man is not ordered to political society

1 The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 317.

2 Three Reformers, pp. 111-117.

3 Summa Theologica, 11 - 11, 64, 2.

by reason of himself as a whole and by reason of all that is in him".¹

Man requires and tends towards social life both by his needs, - material and spiritual - and by his openness to the communications of intelligence and love. He is by nature, as Aristotle puts it, a political animal and ordained to society.

What, then, is the right relation between man and society? It consists in a good at once personal and common. Such a good is not a mere aggregation of individual goods, for this would dissolve society. But neither is it a good proper to a whole which sacrifices the parts to itself, for this would violate the dignity of the person. "The common good is the good human life of the multitude, of a multitude of persons; it is communion in the good life; it is therefore common to the whole and to the parts..."² It is the task of society to work for this common good.

There is a certain inevitable tension of conflict between man and society, since they mutually surpass each other. It is true that man partly realises his possibilities by subordinating himself to the group. But it is also true that the group tends to diminish the person so far as it considers him merely a part. Now this tension cannot be suppressed, and it can only be surmounted by heroic efforts. These efforts require action on both the temporal and the spiritual plane.

The distinction between the temporal and the spiritual is a Christian one, or at least it is a distinction which reaches its ultimate form in the gospel word: "Render unto Caesar the things that are

1 Ibid, 1 - 11, 21, 4 - 3.

2 Scholasticism and Politics, pp.55-56.

Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's". This distinction is not a separation in which there are two absolute and final ends unrelated to one another, thereby permitting man, "by a sagacious division of labour¹ unforeseen by the gospel, to serve both God and Mammon". Nor does it imply that the temporal has a value merely instrumental to the spiritual. Rather, the temporal has its own value; thus the state is supreme in its own order. At the same time, the temporal is subordinate to the spiritual and elevated by the grace of the church. The temporal good is conceived as the fullest possible realization of common human possibilities, under the conditions of earth, (related analogically to given epochs and historical configurations).² It implies a struggle for conditions of freedom: freedom from natural, material miseries and historical servitude; freedom for a fully human life on earth, open to eternal ends. The spiritual good, on the other hand, concerns the order of faith, the gifts of grace, and eternal life, which is participation in the life of God - begun on earth and consummated in Heaven.³ While this order can only be known through revelation and experienced by grace, the good of the temporal order can be known by reason and sought for by all who accept the natural law - "the ensemble of things to do and not to do which follow... in a necessary fashion from the simple fact that man is man".⁴

Thus, man lives in both the temporal order and the spiritual order (whether or not given individuals recognize the spiritual order as

1 Maritain used the phrase in a lecture at Columbia.

2 See True Humanism, p. 103, or p. 132.

3 See, for instance, Scholasticism and Politics, p. 179; True Humanism p. 90.

4 The Rights of Man, p. 36.

such, inasmuch as they are persons who surpass society in the fullest reaches of the spirit). The tension between these two orders is at once a "necessary condition of the growth of history, the essential condition whereby the history of time enigmatically prepares its final consummation in the Kingdom of God",¹ and a problem in the life of man in society to be surmounted by heroic efforts in both orders.

We may conclude this discussion of man and society in the temporal and the spiritual orders (as well as the exposition of Maritain's doctrine of man) by quoting the succinct summary of the point which Maritain himself gives:

"Thus the person craves society, and tends always to surpass it, until man enters at last into the society of God. From the family group (more basic because it has to do with the perpetuation of the species) the person moves on to civil or political society (more exalted because it has to do with rational life itself), and in the midst of civil society it feels the need for more limited groups or fellowships which will contribute to its intellectual and moral life. These the person enters of its own free choice, and they assist in its efforts to ascend to a higher level, yet they will end by cramping it, and it will feel obliged to pass beyond them. Above the plane of civil society the person crosses the threshold of a kingdom which is not of this world and enters a supra-national, supra-racial, supra-temporal society which is called the church, and which has to do with the things which are not Caesar's".²

1 True Humanism, p. 103.

2 The Rights of Man, p. 14.

C. The Movement of History.

Thus far, in expounding Maritain, we have set down the metaphysical presuppositions of history and the doctrine of man. We have yet to consider the movement of history. The question, put in secular terms, is as to whether there is such a thing as progress, and, if so, in what it consists; stated religiously, the question is as to what part is played in the realization of the Kingdom of God by the temporal and the spiritual orders of earth.

1. Historical movement, according to Maritain, is precipitated by man and society in their mutually surpassing character. There is thus provoked a double motion - horizontal and vertical. The vertical motion arises from man's free transcendence of all social process and his tangent to eternity. On earth it is expressed ultimately in the life of the communion of saints, though it also indirectly affects the life of civilization. The horizontal movement arises both from man's transcendence of society and his ordination to it. It represents a triumph over the inertia of nature by the exertions of mind and spirit directed to the task of the earthly good of man. It is the horizontal movement of history with which the idea of progress is concerned.

Maritain himself uses the term "progress". But, just as he sharply distinguishes his view from that of those in the church (as he thinks, contrary to Christianity) and those outside it, who deny progress, so also he means by progress something very different from the automatic progress and simple triumph of good over evil formulated, for instance,

by Condorcet. Although he asserts a metaphysical difference between man and the rest of nature, Maritain nevertheless believes that the life of human societies must be understood as a continuation of natural evolutionary process. He speaks of humanity from this point of view as being still very young, and declares that to take the longer perspective is "to recover faith in the forward march of our species".¹ The forward march of our species consists, more specifically, in "the ascent of conscience... where (this) is linked to a superior level of organization",² both moral and technical: technical in a self-explanatory sense, moral in the sense both of greater unity and of a tendency toward "the law of personality to prevail over the law of individuality".³ But, whereas the natural evolutionary process was automatic up to the appearance of free spirit in man, it is no longer so in the life of human society. The liberty of man sets him apart from all other creatures, and makes him responsible for his own progress. Thus does "evolution, by means of the very mechanism of its synthesis, take unto itself ever-increasing liberty".⁴

The fundamental question for man is, therefore, how to use his liberty to secure greater unity of society and higher quality in its structure. There are two methods. The "coercive" method is inferior and can only achieve superficial results, though it must be acknowledged that a certain measure of coercion will always be necessary in society.

1 The Rights of Man, p. 20.

2 Ibid. p. 20.

3 Scholasticism and Politics, p. 59.

4 Quoted from Reflections sur le Progres, by Pierre T. de Chardin, in The Rights of Man, p. 20.

The "biological" or "internal" method alone is able to attain a real unification of society on higher levels. And this is finally possible only as a result of a "common attraction exerted by a transcendent center¹ which is Spirit and Person". Thus, the horizontal movement of history and the idea of progress itself cannot be discussed adequately without reference to the vertical movement and Him toward whom it tends. It is for this reason that Maritain speaks for the most part in his treatment in explicitly religious terms.

2. There are three such basic terms in Maritain's view of history: the world, the church, and the Kingdom of God. In order to understand him, then, we must see what each of these means and what its relation is to the other.

a. The world. The world signifies the temporal order, the earthly enterprise of man with its own proper and infravalent end. Its life is rooted in nature, but it is as such a work of reason and virtue - particularly the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Its law is the natural law and its scope is the natural catholicity implicit in reason. Yet nature and reason are not self-sufficient or rightly self-enclosed, but open to the special dispensations of grace and subordinate to the spiritual order and eternal destiny of man. This is the essential nature of the world.

But its essential nature is gravely wounded by sin. It is thus not merely the perishable character of all those deeds that pertain to time which is the problem of life here below. "The world belongs to the devil

1 The Rights of Man, p. 21.

by right of conquest".¹ History as the temporal order is not the Kingdom of God, and it is not the field for the realization of the Kingdom of God. It is rather that realm where man, or at least the Christian, is obliged to seek "the refraction... of the exigencies of the Gospel"² in the contingencies of given epochs. Such refraction will, by definition, always be partial and fragmentary, limited by finiteness and by various impurities. Thus the movement in the world is a double one: it is at once toward the Kingdom of God... and the kingdom of reprobation, to be overcome at the last by a "substantial mutation described as the conflagration or burning up of the world".³ There is therefore "progress" in the temporal order in the sense of the development of both the wheat and the tares until the last day.

b. The church. The church is at once the spiritual order of earth and "the chrysalis of the Kingdom".⁴ Though it is in the world it is not of it or of the order of time. Its end is not an earthly good as such, but eternal life, and its scope is the supernatural catholicity of grace. The devil and the prince of this world has no part in the church. At the same time, there are limiting human elements connected with her historical life, and it is therefore necessary to discriminate. "The order of sacred activities will also, in the degree to which it is a collective human form, be deficient here on earth. It is insofar as it is specially assisted by the spirit of God, and in the degree to which it

1 True Humanism, p.101.

2 Ibid, p. 101.

3 Ibid, p. 95.

4 Ibid. p.95.

is governed by its invisible Head (and by its visible head when he acts by right of his universal authority), that the church is indefectible".¹

This distinction between the church as such and the church in its dimension as an historical collective form may be stated also in terms of church and Kingdom of God. If the Kingdom is a city in the new world of the resurrection of the dead where God is King, then it is distinguished from the church in time and in history. But if this distinction be pressed too far, says Maritain, it conflicts with the direct establishment of the church by Jesus. Thus, although in the sense stated, there is a distinction, the church is also already the Kingdom. It is the crucified and wandering kingdom, existent and living, but veiled, not yet in full realization.²

The movement within the spiritual order then, though tending toward that which is more than it, that is, the eschatological kingdom, does not tend toward that which is essentially different from it. While the temporal order or civilization leads toward two opposing final ends, the spiritual order of the church moves toward no other than the final realization of the Kingdom of God.

c. The kingdom. Having spoken of the world and the church and their relation to one another and to the Kingdom, it is necessary, finally, to speak more explicitly of the Kingdom itself, and of the whole matter of the consummation of history and of the fulfilment of life.

"The Kingdom of God constitutes the ultimate end prepared for by

1 Ibid, p. 118.

2 See True Humanism, p. 94.

the movement of all history and in which it concludes".¹

It may be helpful, in clarifying Maritain's conception of the positive preparation of the Kingdom in history, to set his views against the major alternatives (as he sees them).

There is first of all a view of pure discontinuity, wherein history is sealed off, so to speak, and left to its own sinful self-destruction. The world is here conceived in a "satanocratic" way. This Maritain holds to be the Reformation and Barthian position.

There is, second, a perfectionist interpretation which in its two different ways, - theophanic and mystical, theocratic and political, - regards the world as a place to realise the Kingdom too simply. In its theophanic form, expressed principally in the Eastern Church, the world is delivered individually in a mystical way which lifts the faithful beyond natural conditions, while the collective forms of life are ignored. In its theocratic form, men hope too much in the world and in what they can do with it. Secular history in itself is considered holy, the church and the world occupying and disputing the same ground. Such a view was the temptation, if not the actual sin, of medieval Christendom in its feeling about the *sacrum imperium*; and it has since had steady extension and secularization in the West, culminating in the hegelian notion of the nation of race and the marxist idea of class. It is as utopian in principle as the Reformation is defeatist.

The third is similar to the second, but a still further develop-

1 True Humanism, p. 94.

ment of the theocratic principle to the point of complete secularization. History, for Auguste Comte, is already the Kingdom - the Kingdom of pure humanity. Thus no preparation is necessary or possible.

For Maritain, the positive preparation for the Kingdom of God includes a temporal and a spiritual aspect. Society has possibilities of justice, of a realization of the Gospel under earthly conditions, Insofar as these are realised there is a movement toward the Kingdom of God. Insofar as they are not realised, there is a movement toward the kingdom of perdition, and the necessity, as we have seen, of a substantial mutation in the passage from history to the Kingdom of God. Thus Maritain speaks of "that essential discontinuity which is marked by the final¹ mutation".

The possibilities of spiritual life are higher than those of temporal life. For individuals may be elevated by grace in the Church. beyond mere natural virtue, the highest term of the temporal order, even becoming one spirit with God. This consummation of history is reached in mystical experience of oneness with God (meaning not entitative but² intentional oneness). It is the work of grace through charity.

"... It is understood that so long as love has not achieved the transformation of the soul, the latter lives within its own life, without doubt progressively made divine, but nevertheless always enclosed in its created limits, always finite ... but when the transformation of love is accom-

1 Ibid, p. 104.

2 See The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 453.

plished.., the uncreated Love has become, as the immaterial being of love, the principle and agent of all that the soul does..."¹ Thus, if the final fulfilment of life (in the beatific vision) is only possible in the Kingdom beyond history, yet the essential fulfilment of life is possible here below, within the souls of the faithful; and such discontinuity as there is, therefore, is merely quantitative and not qualitative.

3. Conclusion.

This question of continuity - discontinuity between man and God, between history and the Kingdom of God, is obviously decisive for any interpretation of history. And we shall be returning to it later on. Meanwhile, we must proceed to the general exposition of what we consider to be the second of the great alternative interpretations of history within Christendom, namely the dialectical position - as it is contained in the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr.

1 The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 457.

CHAPTER II

Reinhold Niebuhr

A. Introduction.

When D.R. Davies remarks, in his little book, Reinhold Niebuhr, Prophet from America,¹ that Henry Ford was one of the greatest influences in forming Niebuhr's thought, he is being more than merely facetious. Indeed, he is pointing to that which is most characteristic in Niebuhr, namely, the fact that he is not primarily a thinker speculating about history, but a man living and acting in it who must think to find his way. No doubt all thinkers are, so to speak, organic to time and place, and much more conditioned by historical circumstance than most would care to admit or perhaps even realize. Niebuhr is not only aware of the importance of particularity in thought, but is actually unusually sensitive to it. Thus it is that, whereas, in treating Maritain, we set out from an exposition of thomist ontological principles as presuppositions of history, we must with Niebuhr begin with a few biographical notes.

1. It will no doubt be impossible to give an adequate account of those external influences and internal dispositions which have been decisive for Niebuhr's thought. Yet enough can be gleaned from his writings, supplemented by knowledge gained through personal contact, to lay hold on much that is illuminating and indispensable to an understanding of him.

a. Home

The first book which Niebuhr published, Does Civilization need

Religion!, is dedicated to his parents. In it he speaks of his father, an immigrant German Evangelical pastor in the American mid-west, as teaching him that "the critical faculty can be united with a reverent spirit".¹ Here is contained that affirmation and yet challenge, that Yes and No, which has been the distinguishing feature of Niebuhr's attitude from the beginning, though to be sure the "dialectic" has been sharpened with the years. This critical but reverend spirit instilled by a pastor-father, we note as the first point of departure for Reinhold Niebuhr.

b. Training.

The second is his "liberal" theological training. Taking a degree at Yale in 1915, he completed his formal education at the time of the flood-tide of theological liberalism (neither the first world war nor Karl Barth having yet undermined it). What might be described as both its virtues and its vices made important impressions on Niebuhr's mind. On the one hand, there were the open-minded spirit of inquiry and the sense of human creativity and historical dynamism. These deposits of the Renaissance spirit, re-inforced by the activism of American life, left a permanent mark on him more crucial than even he perhaps has usually suggested - describing his experience and expounding his thought in the context of an American church which he felt was submerged in the errors of liberalism - but nevertheless true, as realized well, for instance, by continental theologians of "neo-orthodox" persuasion. On the other hand, that the influence of liberalism constrained him to re-fashion or even

1 Dedication of Does Civilization Need Religion?

forsake in some sense certain aspects of the Christian faith is suggested by his description of his attitude, at the time of his ordination, toward, for instance, the statement in the Apostles' Creed¹- "I believe in the resurrection of the body", or toward the sacraments.² And if this part of the liberal influence has not been permanent in positive terms, it was yet most assuredly present in his early theological years, and it remains to this day as something to be continually refuted.

c. Intellectual pilgrimage.

Finally here, we may note a gradual emergence in Niebuhr of the sense that the facts of life, as he was experiencing and observing them in personal, industrial, and international terms, did not fit the optimistic view of man and history which liberalism held, and that consequently a general theological reformulation was necessary. We must trace this "gradual emergence".

When, during the years of his Detroit pastorate, Niebuhr wrote³ in his diary - "I am not really a Christian", and spoke of "the essentially unethical nature"⁴ of modern society, he revealed that acute awareness of the contradictions in human life which has ever characterized him. The crucial question for him has always been: How is evil to be understood, and its expressions abolished or mitigated? His answer was first liberal, finally biblical.

If the liberal spirit saw the source of evil as residing in man's misuse of freedom, it did not locate the reason for that misuse

1 See opening pages of Beyond Tragedy.

2 See Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic, p. 6.

3 Ibid, p. 166.

4 Ibid, Preface and Apology, p. viii.

very deeply in the human spirit. The characteristic tendency was to suggest that what was wrong was ignorance and/or simply a lack of sufficient moral striving. Niebuhr himself, as a liberal, saw evil as the result of lack of effort, and correctible by effort. Men know that love is the law of life. What is needed is a much more serious effort to realize its demands and implications, individually and collectively. As late as 1926, he was able to record: "'Maybe it (Jesus' ethic) would work if we tried it hard enough'... that may be the answer to the whole question".¹

Trying Jesus' ethic "hard enough" involved, he saw clearly, ascetism in some sense; for he recognized both the validity of the absolute law of love and the need to act in a world which did not live by it. His first impulse was toward a witness to the absolute demand of the Gospel in a disavowal of concrete responsibilities. With respect to war, he declared, for instance: "I am done with this business".² But he was aware too that it was not so easy to be "done" with war or any institutional evil, criticising the religious idealists opposed to unethical nationalism for being "not sufficiently aware of the intimate and organic relation between the imperialism of nations and the whole tendency of avarice which characterizes Western life".³ And if his subsequent decision has been a rejection of a vocational asceticism for himself and as a general Christian policy, it is neither because he ceased to believe in the absolute quality of the law of love nor

1 Ibid, p. 122.

2 Ibid, p. 147.

3 Does Civilization Need Religion?, p. 230.

because he had decided that asceticism could be dispensed with. On the contrary, he has held that love as the law of life accepted by Christians demands both a lay asceticism with as full a measure of independence from the world as possible consistent with doing one's duty in it,¹ and a vocational asceticism which disavows responsibilities and risks martyrdom - an asceticism without which the church and the world might "live under the illusion that the Kingdom of Caesar is the Kingdom of Christ".² He rejected vocational asceticism for himself and as a general Christian policy, because, as he declared about the time of leaving the pastorate, pure asceticism is "useless for any direction of the affairs of a larger society".³ But he knew that he was compromising with evil in so doing, even as he would have been in choosing the opposite course. In an evil world, therefore, there is need for both Christian asceticism and Christian responsibility. There is compromise and evil either way, with no possibility of guiltlessness and purity. One must simply choose which compromise to make.

Thus did Niebuhr discover the impossibility of fulfilling Jesus' ethic by "trying hard enough". And in so doing he learned that the problem of evil is deeper than he had thought. His realization of this undoubtedly marks the turning point in his journey from theological liberalism to a more biblical form of Christianity.

It will perhaps be well to describe this transition more fully from a slightly different perspective. Although in his first systematic

1 Ibid, p. 229.

2 Beyond Tragedy, p. 286.

3 Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic, p. 196.

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work, he still stands within the so-called liberal point of view, he conducts a polemic against a certain type of theological liberalism, specifically that kind of liberalism, rooted in a philosophical monism, which lacks adequate ethical tension.

Religion is the meeting ground of metaphysics and ethics. It declares that human values are rooted in cosmic facts. The best possible religion therefore is one which provides, on the one hand, the most adequate defense of the proposition that human values are related to cosmic facts, and, on the other, the greatest dynamic to the task of realizing values in individual and corporate life. There are, however, possibilities of conflict between the metaphysical and the ethical tasks in religion. A major one arises, according to Niebuhr, when religion becomes related to a philosophical monism which confuses God and the world. From such a confusion two attitudes toward life may be derived. One is a resignation to the natural order as already divine and immutable - characteristic of the East; the other is an overestimation of human capacities and the possibilities of history - on the whole the characteristic Western error despite the presence of dualism in Christianity. The ethical consequence of such optimism is clear: complacency, too easy acceptance of things as they are, and/or too facile hopes about their improvement. The untenability of such theological liberalism rooted in philosophical monism has been shown and the problem of contemporary religion has been set, he thought, by the advance of science which raises

questions about the purposefulness of creation and by the tragic realities of industrial and international life which ~~work~~^{make} for scepticism about human nature and historical progress.

"The only fruitful alternative to a monism and pantheism which identifies God and the world, the real and the ideal," wrote Niebuhr, "is a dualism which maintains some kind of distinction between them and does not lose one in the other".¹ Such a dualism is not, to be sure, without difficulties, for it is impossible to have two absolutes, and it is unsatisfactory to be unable to say precisely how good and evil, (God and the devil) are related to one another. Yet if the choice is between a metaphysically inadequate dualism which is ethically potent, and a metaphysically adequate monism which is ethically impotent, he preferred the former. "In a sense religion is always forced to choose between an adequate metaphysics and an adequate ethics. This is not to say that the two interests are incompatible but that they are not identical. When there is a conflict between them it is better to leave the metaphysical problem with some loose ends than to develop a religion which is inimical to moral values."²

But the choice is not between a metaphysically inadequate dualism that is morally potent and a metaphysically adequate monism that is morally impotent, for the reason that monism itself is not only morally impotent but metaphysically inadequate as well. It may be logically more consistent, but it does not, as Niebuhr says any interpretation must, do justice

1 Does Civilization Need Religion?, p. 194.

2 Ibid, p. 214.

"to the fact that creative purpose meets resistance in the world".¹

"It may be impossible to do full justice to the two types of facts by any set of symbols or definitions; but life gives the lie to any attempt by which one is explained completely in terms of the other."² Dualism, on the other hand, does do justice to these two sets of facts, and thus is tenable, though not altogether satisfactory logically.

Niebuhr, in elaborating a metaphysical dualism, declares that "if a place for freedom and purpose in the cosmic order, however conditioned, is discovered, the essential affirmation of religious faith is metaphysically verified",³ and he asserts that science makes such a discovery. He argues with Whitehead that, since the dynamic nature of reality does not account for the various forms in which it ~~is~~^{is} made concrete, the transcendence and immanence of God is true, and human values have thus a basis in reality. At the same time, God is not merely continuous or identical with the world. "His unchangeableness is his self-consistency in relation to all change; but this does not justify the deterministic conclusion of a 'complete self-consistency of the temporal world'. The reality of God and the reality of evil as a positive force are thus both accepted",⁴ by scientific philosophy as well as by religion.

Although it is held that science supplies the ground of a metaphysically validated religion, the scope of religion is not confined to the bare concepts of science.⁵ There are "overbeliefs" which, though

1 Ibid, p. 200.

2 Ibid, p. 210.

3 Ibid, p. 212.

4 Ibid, pp. 212-213.

5 Ibid, pp. 211-214.

inadequate, are nevertheless as justified as they are inevitable in religious devotion. These overbeliefs consist essentially in the personalization of the forces of good and evil and involve a dramatic rather than philosophic elaboration of the conflict between them. Their justification is, metaphysically, that they are based upon facts and experiences which, though perhaps inconsistent with each other, are nevertheless equally true. Their ethical justification is that they further heighten the tension between good and evil and enhance spiritual energy.¹

Thus does Niebuhr, becoming more and more aware of the conflicts which reality reveals as well as harmonies, move toward a qualified liberalism.

There is yet a final stage in this movement from a liberal to a more biblical interpretation of the Christian faith - that of his criticism of philosophical dualism itself, concluding in a rejection of "cheap credulities for majestic myth".²

The five or six years that elapsed between the publication of Does Civilization Need Religion?, and Moral Man and Immoral Society and Reflections on the End of an Era, saw at least three vital changes for Niebuhr. One was leaving the Detroit pastorate to teach at Union Theological Seminary in New York. A second was his marriage. The third was a decisive change in theological position. It has often been thought that the theological change came as the result of reading Kierkegaard and contemporary continental theologians influenced by him. Undoubtedly this

1 See *Ibid*, pp. 214-215.

2 Prof. Niebuhr used this phrase in a Union Lecture.

influence upon Niebuhr has been considerable. But, on the basis of what the writer knows of him, it should rather be said that he moved as it were under his own power and through his own experience, being confirmed but not determined by other thinkers and working out his own distinctive point of view.

At any rate, it is apparent, in his Leaves..., and in Does Civilization Need Religion, that he was profoundly dissatisfied with both the metaphysical foundations and the ethical fruits of modern liberal religion. His polemic against theology based on philosophical monism is one phase and expression of this dissatisfaction. In its place he suggests a point of view rooted in a metaphysical dualism. But one senses a certain dissatisfaction with this alternative, even as he puts it forward, in passages which stress the perils to vital religion in too close association with any philosophical system; for reason is seen as at least a partial and potential threat to the imaginative discernment and moral fervor of the more elemental religious expressions. He speaks, for instance, of "the naturally incompatible factors of reason and imagination, of intelligence and moral dynamic (as) really the crux of the religious and moral problem..."¹ And at one point he goes so far as to note how religious myth reconciles these and does "justice to the conflicts which the world reveals as obviously as its unities".² Yet he draws back here from a really serious consideration of a mythical dualism and, as we have seen, attempts to construct a rational, philosophical

1 Does Civilization Need Religion?, p.222.

2 Ibid, p. 195.

dualism. By the time of the publication of Reflections on the End of an Era, however, Niebuhr was explicitly attacking rational dualisms, be they Platonic or Barthian, on the ground that they find no meaning in nature and history and "relegate perfection completely to another world of pure transcendence".¹ His whole criticism of too rational systems, be they monistic or dualistic, (this criticism being the negative precondition of his acceptance of religious myth) is given succinct expression in a later passage from Beyond Tragedy:

"A rational or logical expression of the relationship (between "time and eternity) invariably leads either to a pantheism in which "God and the world are identified, and the temporal in its totality "is equated with the ~~temporal~~ ^{eternal}; or in which they are separated so "that a false supernaturalism emerges, a dualism between an eternal "and spiritual world without content and a temporal world without "meaning or significance."²

Myth, particularly biblical myth, does not fall into these errors. He declares that

"myth alone is capable of picturing the world as a realm of "coherence and meaning without defying the facts of incoherence. "Its world is coherent because all facts in it are related to the "same central source of meaning; but it is not rationally "coherent because myth is not under the abortive necessity of "relating all things to each other in terms of immediate rational "unity."³

And again:

"For only in the concepts of religious myth can an imperfect "world mirror the purposes of a divine creator and can the mercy "of God make the fact of sin and imperfection bearable without "destroying moral responsibility for the evil of imperfection or "obscuring its realities in actual history".⁴

In summary, then, we may say that we have traced the develop-

1 Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 286.

2 Beyond Tragedy, p. 4.

3 An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 26.

4 Reflections on the End of an Era, p. 292.

ment of Niebuhr's thought, proceeding as it does from an awareness of contradictions in the soul and in the world to principles of interpretation embraced to make sense of them. As he measured these contradictions in ever greater depth, he moved from a theological liberalism based on a philosophical monism, to a qualified liberalism rooted in a philosophical dualism, to a point of view, whose determinative feature is an acceptance of biblical revelation and myth.

2. A Religion of Revelation and Myth.

There are three ways, broadly speaking, of interpreting the relation between God and the world. One asserts an identity, or at least a simple continuity, between them. This is the monistic view. The second, or dualistic interpretation, separates the two in a simple discontinuity. The third affirms that God is in the world and yet not in it, both expressed through it and contradicted by it.. This is the dialectical view, classically present in the Bible and maintained by Reinhold Niebuhr.

a. Revelation.

To say that God is intimately related to the world and expressed through it is to imply, speaking metaphysically, that the world is good. Its epistemological meaning is that God can be known by an analysis of the world, "being understood by the things that are made",¹ as St. Paul puts it. In this sense Christianity has a natural theology and agrees with naturalistic religions, Or so, at least, a dialectical understanding of Christianity, such as one gets in Reinhold Niebuhr, would maintain.

1 Romans I; 19-20.

But to hold, on the other hand, that God is beyond the world and even contradicted by it, is to suggest the contrast between Christianity and all naturalistic religions and to declare at once the transcendence of God and the impossibility of knowing Him adequately by a mere analysis of the world.

"The real situation is that he (man) has an environment of "eternity which he cannot know through the mere logical ordering "of his experience... Man is thus in the position of being unable "to comprehend ... without a principle of comprehension which is "beyond his comprehension."¹

This dimension of depth in human experience is appreciated by mystic religions, and the fact constitutes both their superiority to naturalistic religions and their point of agreement with Christianity. But here the similarity between mysticism and Christianity ends. For the mystic "defines" God in terms of negation, deprecates the created world, provisionally deifies but finally loses man in an undifferentiated eternity;² while Christianity holds fast to the distinction between Creator and creature but expects "the unveiling of the eternal purpose and will, underlying the flux and evanescence of the world..., and the expectation is fulfilled in³ personal and social-historical experience." Thus Christianity is a religion³ of revelation.

The character of revelation, as Niebuhr understands it, is double - that is, personal and social-historical. He asserts:

"Without the public and historical revelation the private "experience of God would remain poorly defined and subject to "caprice. Without the private experience of God, the public and "historical revelation would not gain credence."⁴

1 Vol. 1 of Gifford Lectures, p. 125.

2 The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, see pp. 135-136.

3 Ibid, p. 126.

4 Ibid, p. 127.

The content of private or general revelation is (1) the sense of reverence for majesty and dependence upon it (2) the sense of obligation to the source of being and meaning and of unworthiness before it (3) the longing for forgiveness and fulfillment. The first, that is, the sense of reverential dependence, becomes, when transferred from the inner to the outer world, the sense that the whole creation depends upon the same source of being. This is also in the category of general revelation. However, the second and third, which concern the sense of God's judgment and mercy, take on a more definite meaning only as the private, general sense of them is augmented by public-historical events, apprehended by Christians in the context of the ongoing experience of the Hebrew-Christian community. The private sense of obligation and unworthiness is supported by the prophetic interpretation of events which declares that (1) Israel has a covenant with God which it has refused in its pride to keep, thus bringing His condemnation upon itself (2) that the whole experience of men in history, being within God's purpose, is marked by divine judgment insofar as there is human rebellion. And likewise, the private longing for forgiveness and fulfillment is finally answered in the Incarnation and Cross, the content of which is a forgiveness which does not abrogate judgment and a judgment which does not cancel forgiveness.

Thus, we may say that God, being beyond the world, can be known adequately only as He discloses Himself and His purpose to us, which He does in personal and social-historical revelation that mutually reinforce one another.

b. Myth.

But, if the dialectical view of God's relation to the world necessitates, from the divine side, revelation, it involves, from the human side, according to Niebuhr, mythical rather than rational description of what God says. A religious statement, by definition, cannot be literally true, for the categories of the finite are not able to embrace the infinite, to say nothing of the fact that human sin corrupts the vision of God. ^{to take events from the surface of nature and history} It is therefore necessary/to suggest and describe the dimension of depth that lies beyond.

"The transcendent source of the meaning of life is thus in such relation to all temporal process that a profound insight into any process or reality yields a glimpse of the reality which is beyond it. This reality can be revealed and expressed only in mythical terms. These mythical terms are the most adequate symbols of reality because the reality which we experience constantly suggests a center and source of reality, which not only transcends immediate experience but also finally transcends the rational forms and categories by which we seek to apprehend and describe it."¹

The Christian affirmations may, therefore, be held to be essentially though not literally true. Such an epistemology of myth - rooted in the pauline word, "We see through a glass, darkly"² - stands between and beyond more rational theories. Against valuational theologies which tend to ascribe absolute significance to finite ideas, it asserts that we see "darkly", or do not see. Against mystical theologies which fear to name God lest He be blasphemed, it asserts that we do see. It is only by mythical methods that we avoid the alternative of either a naively anthropomorphic God or a God defined as final nothingness. It is also, Niebuhr thinks,

1 The Nature of Religious Experience, - Chapter "The Truth of Myths"-p.135

2 See Niebuhr's sermon on this text in Discerning the Signs of the Times.

by a mythical interpretation of the Christian faith alone that the church can engage without capitulating to the modern mind. For, on the one hand, the essential truth of the basic tenets of faith can be maintained and, as he thinks, shown to be more adequate than their more "secular" alternatives, while on the other hand, obscurantism is avoided. Thus, a mythical epistemology, both in principle and in strategy, is regarded as fundamental.

Christianity is, then, a "natural religion", but distinctively a religion of revelation and myth. God speaks to Christians, as to all men, in general revelation. But Christians apprehend what He says, particularly concerning judgment and mercy, in the context of a given community, whose decisive historical experiences become the vehicle of further, special revelation. Thus the transcendent God reveals Himself in increasingly specific terms as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer, and His revelation is apprehended and described in the three great biblical myths of creation, fall, and redemption. These myths are the content of Christian theology and the context of its understanding of man. To Niebuhr's interpretation of this doctrine, central in the interpretation of history, we now turn.

B. The Doctrine of Man

1. "Man does not know himself truly except as he knows himself¹ confronted by God."

The Christian view of man as confronted by God is, according to Niebuhr, distinctive in the way it interprets and relates to each other three aspects of human existence. It emphasizes man's status as 'imago dei', yet underlines his finite and limited character on every level - historical and transhistorical. It maintains that man's refusal to accept his creatureliness under God is his sin. And it asserts that the solution of man's predicament lies in God's grace as pardon and as power. We must examine each of these more fully, beginning with the doctrine of man as a creature in the image of God.

2. Man as creature in the image of God.

"The essential nature of man", writes Niebuhr, "contains two elements; and there are correspondingly two elements in the original perfection of man. To the essential nature of man belong, on the one hand, all his natural endowments, and determinations, his physical and social impulses, his sexual and racial differentiations, in short his character as a creature embedded in the natural order. On the other hand, his essential nature also includes the freedom of his spirit,² his transcendence over natural process and finally his self-transcendence". Since the God of Christian faith is the source of both vitality and form, man - created by God in His own image - is not only godlike in the highest

1 The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, p. 131.

2 Vol. I, p. 270.

reaches of his spirituality but in the lowliness of his physical existence as well. Yet, the heart of the *imago dei* is, as it were, in that dimension of spirit which transcends both natural process and ratiocination, and finally itself in such a way that it looks beyond itself to God and can find rest only in Him, - that is, in an obedience of will to the perfection of love.

It is impossible, Niebuhr holds, to understand man or to describe him correctly without making a distinction between his essential nature and the virtue of conformity to it. For, while nothing can destroy the essential nature of man, his freedom allows him possibilities of refusing¹ to act according to it - possibilities which have of course been actualized in sin.

This crucial distinction between essential nature and the virtue of conformity to it, and the problem of the relation between them, has been confused, he thinks, by a literalistic interpretation of the myth of the fall which placed the perfection from which man fell in a particular historical period. Such an interpretation encouraged Catholic thought to divide man into "*pura naturalia*" not affected by, and a "*donum supernaturale*" wholly lost in, the fall, while it inclined Protestantism toward the doctrine of total depravity. Thus, "the paradox that sin is a corruption of man's true essence but not its destruction, is obscured in both² Catholic and Protestant thought".

1 Vol. I, p. 269.

2 Vol. I, p. 269.



Nevertheless, the double category of "pura naturalia" and "donum supernaturale", has itself a certain tentative validity if properly interpreted. For it points to the requirements of man as embedded in the natural order, and, as free spirit. The traditional natural law corresponds to the first, roughly, and defines the proper organization of man's natural functions; while the so-called "theological virtues" of faith, hope and love define his more ultimate requirements as free spirit. Since, however, the freedom of man reaches down and qualifies the lowest aspects of natural function, and since man remains a creature in the highest reaches of the spirit, this cannot be pressed, as Catholic thought presses it, to mean that one could be wholly lost and the other purely retained. The real situation is that both "natural justice" and "original righteousness" are indissolubly linked in the unity of existence, and that both are corrupted, yet present with us as requirements of our essential being.

Niebuhr, having rejected a particular period as the locus of man's original perfection, admitted its corruption, but asserted its continued presence with us, asks where it resides, and what its content is.

It resides, he says, in the self in the moment of transcending itself and judging its own concretion of will. "It is in this moment of self-transcendence that the consciousness and memory of original perfection arise."¹ In this moment it knows itself to be one finite creature among many, and to be guilty of pretending to be more than this,^{and,} therefore, also of injustice to its fellows. Original righteousness is thus present with sinful man as his uneasy conscience, as the law which he knows he ought to

1 Ibid, p. 277.

live by but does not live by. That he has such an uneasy conscience is the proof that he possesses no unspoiled goodness; but it also proves that he is not totally depraved, and gives the point of contact for God's further activity with him, particularly for the revelation and redemption in Christ.

Now this self which in the moment of transcendence is the locus of original righteousness is not the universal and intelligible self as opposed to the empirical self, as idealism maintains, for this denies the unity of the self. There is only one self, which is both the agent of action and the judge of its actions; a self that acts sinfully but also knows its higher possibilities, which it apprehends as law. "The 'I', which from the perspective of self-transcendence, regards the sinful self not as self but as 'sin', is the same 'I' which from the perspective of sinful action regards the transcendent possibilities of the self as not the self but as law. It is the same self..."¹

In placing original righteousness in a moment of the self which transcends history (as action) though not outside the self in history (as judge of action) Niebuhr believes he is in agreement with the symbolic interpretation of the myth of the fall. For there are no recorded perfect actions of Adam. Perfection before the fall may, then, be said to be, in a sense, perfection before the act (if act be understood to include all thoughts and movements of the anxious self in its world). Thus, "the original righteousness of man stands, as it were, outside history. Yet

¹ Ibid, pp. 278-279.

it is in the man who is in history, and when sin comes it actually borrows from this original righteousness. For the pretension of sin is that its act is not in history but an act of impartiality, a deed of eternity.¹"

We have, then, noted that the locus of original righteousness in sinful man is his uneasy conscience. What, it must be asked, is the content of original righteousness? It is faith, hope, and love - or harmony between man and God, within man himself, and between himself and his fellows. Faith is a requirement of man in his freedom because, without it, he seeks for an impossible self-sufficiency. Hope is a particular form of faith which deals with the future. Love is both a derivative of faith and an independent requirement of human freedom because, without it, ~~man~~^{man} disregards the ~~basic~~^{primal} fact that God is the centre of being and meaning, tries abortively to organize life by and around himself, and degrades other persons to the level of objects.

This content of original righteousness is, as has been said, present to sinful man as "law". Its relation to man in his sin is indicated, Niebuhr points out, in the "Thou shalt" of the basic commandment. For, if life conformed to it, the "Thou shalt" would be pointless. On the other hand, if there were not still in sinful man the sense of a more ultimate perfection the "Thou shalt" would be completely irrelevant and unintelligible to him. In Jesus' parable of the rich young man three aspects of man's condition are made very obvious. The rich young

1 Ibid, p. 280.

man, in coming to Jesus, reveals his awareness of a more ultimate perfection than he has or can attain in obedience to historic laws. But in asking his question, he shows also that he does not know the full character of this more ultimate perfection. Yet, by his refusal to follow Jesus' advice, he makes plain that he is not ready to follow it even when it is known. All this, Niebuhr says, is symbolic of the continuity yet contradiction between man's essential nature and his sinful condition - a condition insoluble from the standpoint of human striving, but not, as Jesus suggests, impossible with God.

Thus, faith, hope, and love are not simple actualities of human existence; yet they remain relevant as the very law of our self-transcendent freedom and the ultimate requirement of man as the image of God.

But the Christian faith claims not only that man is the image of God. It asserts also that he is a creature, derived and dependent and weak, subject to change and decay, and unable by his own power to complete the meaning of his life. It must be emphasized that this creatureliness of man refers not merely to his bodily particularly but to his mind as well, for it too is limited in scope and power. It is man in his unity that Christianity declares to be finite and involved in all the relativities and contingencies of nature - history.

Christianity does not believe, however, that finite limitation and particularity is evil, or even, of itself, a source of evil. It does contrast the limitedness and mortality of man with the majesty of God in terms which suggest a provisional pathos; but it also, and more

basically, maintains that the facts of human finitude must be accepted with reverence. For it sees each part of life as related to the whole plan of God and rooted in Him as the center of meaning. The presence of a certain ambiguity in the thought of St. Paul on the relation of mortality to sin, and of platonic influences in some Christian theologians, does not, Niebuhr thinks, finally qualify the basic biblical-Christian feeling that life in all its mortal facts is essentially good because a good God made it.

Along with the faith which accepts life's fragmentary character as belonging to the purpose of God goes the hope that God will fulfill its meaning. Man is a creature who has indeterminate possibilities. These possibilities are so great, according to Christianity, that they cannot be realised in nature-history, not by any exertion of man himself. The conception of the fulfillment of life in Christianity is, of course, generally consonant with its whole interpretation of human existence. It affirms that life, if it is to be fulfilled, must be fulfilled by the power of God, and as it essentially is - a unity of body and spirit. The richness and variety of natural-historical existence is declared to be taken up into the Kingdom of God: "I believe in the resurrection of the body..." Man is not therefore mind which sloughs off the body and translates itself into the divine abyss; he is a finite creature - a unity of body and spirit - resurrected by the power of God. Thus, man, though the image of God, is a creature, and remains so - both discreet and limited - on every level of the fulfillment of life - in history and beyond history in the Kingdom of God.

3. Man as creature and sinner.

If Christianity is marked by a lofty sense of man's stature as image dei and a creature of indeterminate possibilities, it is also characterized by the grave view it takes of the sinful situation in which he stands, says Niebuhr. In setting forth his interpretation of this aspect of the Christian view of man, we shall be concerned with (a) the occasion for sin, (b) the source of sin, (c) the nature of sin.

(a) The occasion (though not the cause) of man's sin is given in the ambiguity of his finiteness and freedom. "He stands at the juncture¹ of nature and spirit." He is a created thing, whose life is rooted in nature and limited by it, yet transcends nature and in a sense dominates it. He can see farther than he can reach, envisaging but not comprising the whole. Thus, man knows both limits and possibilities. He is therefore anxious.

Anxiety has a double character. It is "the basis of all creativity as well as the precondition of sin... Man may, in the same moment, be anxious because he has not become what he ought to be; and also anxious lest he should cease to be at all".² The first aspect of anxiety is creative, the latter invariably destructive; though it is important to note that, in life, the two cannot be simply separated. The ideal possibility is that perfect trust in God will assure the creative expression of anxiety and obviate its sinful possibilities. But this ideal possibility is not realised. Man sins.

1 Ibid, p. 17.

2 Ibid, pp. 183-184.

(b) What is the source of his sinning? A defect of the will.

"Sin is to be regarded as neither a necessity of man's nature nor yet a pure caprice of his will. It proceeds rather from a defect of the will for which reason it is not wholly deliberate: but since it is the will in which the defect is found and the will presupposes freedom the defect cannot be attributed to a taint in man's nature."¹

The paradox of finiteness and freedom, with its inevitable concomitant anxiety, does not lead to sin unless it is falsely interpreted - that is to say, unless sin is presupposed. Yet the situation is always falsely interpreted, man so choosing. This means that sin cannot be derived from or explained by anything other than itself. To say man "chooses" is not, however, to imply a too simple freedom. He is free in the sense that he is responsible for his evil. But he is not free, in as much as he is the victim of "original sin". This so-called original sin is not merely the inertia of nature, nor the limitation of mind, nor historical-environmental conditioning. It is rather a bias toward evil within the will itself. Since, as has been said, it is within the will and the will presupposes freedom, man is responsible for it. Having sinned, there is in man a bias toward evil. Man need never have sinned, however, except he had already sinned. "Sin posits itself".² Behind actual sin is original sin; and behind original sin is the tempting serpent - instrument of the devil, an angel not created evil but himself fallen. Thus, "One may... go farther back than human history and still

1 Ibid, p. 242.

2 Kierkegaard, Begriff der Angst, p. 57, quoted by Niebuhr in Human Nature, p. 252.

not escape the paradoxical conclusion that the situation of finiteness and freedom would not lead to sin if sin were not already introduced into the situation. Nor can the temptation which¹ is compounded of the situation of finiteness and freedom, plus the fact of sin, be regarded as leading necessarily to sin in the life of each individual, if again sin is not first presupposed in that life".

To believe that man is a victim of original sin yet responsible for his evil is, as we shall have occasion to observe at greater length later, to possess a principle of interpretation for man and history that has very great implications. More specifically, it is to be able to refute or correct on the one hand, too simply deterministic doctrines - be they psychological, sociological, or theological - which contradict the interior knowledge which the soul has of its unnecessary involvement in evil, and on the other, too simply moralistic, pelagian notions which overestimate human freedom and thus tend toward self-righteousness and cruelty. The situation is that there is more freedom and therefore responsibility for both actual sin and original sin than the determinists realize, while there is less freedom in actual sin and more responsibility in original sin than voluntaristic moralism suggests. For sin¹ is never merely the inevitable result of factors beyond our control, nor yet sheer, deliberate preference of evil to good, as such,

We noted a moment ago that the "logic of sin" is that it posits itself, that it leads from actual to original sin, and from original sin

¹ Human Nature, p. 254

to the tempting serpent as the instrument of the devil. This means that there is, according to Christianity, a force of evil in the world prior to and greater than man which has disrupted the harmony of creation. But this devil is himself an angel endowed with freedom who has fallen - like man, unnecessarily. Thus even the devil is not an adequate explanation of evil. For beyond him also, sin posits itself. Indeed, its logic leads straight to the nature of God; and this is precisely where philosophies more consistent than Christianity carry it, says Niebuhr. What then is the justification, if any, for stopping short, and refusing to draw the final implication of the logic of sin? It is the double empirical one that we know we ourselves, and not God, to be responsible for the evil we do, and, that evil, though indubitably real, is parasitic upon the more primary reality - good. If, then, there is a certain conflict between the empirical and the logical, "Loyalty to all the facts may require a provisional defiance of logic, lest complexity in the facts¹ of experience be denied for the sake of a premature logical consistency".

Thus, the source of sin and evil lies not in God, but in a defect of will within His creatures.

(c) Having spoken thus far of the occasion for sin, and of the source of sin, we have now to consider its nature.

To assert, as Christianity does, that the devil operates by God's permission if not in His commission is, at once, to admit that evil is finally mysterious - that we do not fully know the relation between the principle of good and the principle of evil in the world, and, to declare

¹ Ibid, p. 263.

that evil is parasitic or dependent on the good, which is the essential reality:

"The idea in Hebraic mythology that Satan is both a rebel against God and yet ultimately under His dominion, expresses the paradoxical fact that on the one hand evil is something more than the absence of order, and on the other hand that it depends upon order. There can be disorder only in an integrated world; and the forces of disorder can be effective only if they are themselves ordered and integrated... Evil, in other words, is not the absence but the corruption of good".¹

This interpretation of the relation of evil to good, of the devil to God, permits, Niebuhr thinks, a more profound measuring of the depth of sin and force of evil in history than is possible on any other presupposition. It is in fact an absolutely indispensable insight for understanding history's negative and destructive potencies, (even as the doctrine of God's grace as power and as pardon is essential to understanding history's creativity and life's fulfillment). Man could not reject God except for the fact that he is created in the image of God. This is the anthropological meaning of the truth that evil is a parasitic corruption of the good.

But we must go on to define sin more specifically. Sin is a disruption which both depends upon and violates the harmony of creation, - by unbelief, pride, sensuality, and injustice. Unbelief disrupts the harmony of the world by denying God His position as the center and source of meaning, and is the primal sin. Pride, its obverse side, puts the self in the central position. Sensuality disrupts life's harmony by identifying the self unduly with some impulse within the self. And

1 The Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 73.

injustice, flowing from all the others, is the violation of harmony wherein the self, claiming too much for itself, gives less consideration to other selves than is their rightful due.

Man¹ is limited yet limitless, both bound and free. He is therefore anxious. In his anxiety he is aware of his weakness and the necessity for completion. Perfect trust in God presupposed, he would pursue the true and qualitative development of life by subjecting himself in obedience to the will of God. But unbelief or sin presupposed, he seeks its quantitative development wherein he tries "to transmute his finiteness into infinity, his weakness into strength, his dependence into independence".¹ The self deposes God and establishes itself. Yet the self which it establishes is less than the true self; and by giving life a false center it destroys the real possibilities for itself and others, thereby increasing the insecurity which it had sought to overcome. Thus man may seek to escape the ambiguity of finiteness and freedom by hiding his finiteness in a proud assertion of freedom. Sometimes, however, he seeks to escape the paradox in the opposite way, that is, by trying to sink his freedom in finiteness or a natural vitality. This is sensuality.² "When anxiety has conceived it brings forth pride and sensuality";² both of which, for other life, always mean injustice.

Niebuhr distinguishes three types of pride - pride of power, pride of knowledge, pride of virtue. In each, pride can take the form either of a complacency which implicitly denies the contingent and dependent

Human Nature,
1 ~~186~~, p. 261.
2 Ibid, p. 186.

character of human existence or else of seeking security and independence to overcome recognized weakness. The first form is more often associated with those who are in some sense established, while the second is usually found among those who are not. Both forms of pride are present in each group however; it is only a question as to which form is primary. In the quest for power, knowledge, or virtue, there is always an element of complacent satisfaction with what is possessed, yet a darkly conscious awareness of its insufficiency which inclines the sinning self towards strategies which seek to obscure its known conditioned character; always a seeming unawareness of the weakness of man, the limitations of his knowledge, the relativity of his values, yet also the sense of these things and a pretentious attempt to deny them. The final dimension of this pretention is reached when moral¹ pride issues in religious pride and explicitly claims divine sanction for human standards. This is what Niebuhr has in mind when he says that religion is not an inherently virtuous thing but only the final battleground between the self and God. And it is this which shows most profoundly the relevance of "a religion of revelation in which a holy and loving God is revealed to man as the source and end of all finite existence against whom the self-will of man is shattered¹ and his pride abased". Yet even the recognition of such a truth in principle must not be assumed to guarantee that in fact man will not make his very humility the instrument of a new pride. On the contrary he always does so. Such is the height of human freedom and the extent of the possibilities of its misuse.

1 Ibid, p. 201.

Now it is because man is proud that he is dishonest. Since he is quite obviously not the center of the world, he must deceive both himself and others if he is to make the presumption plausible. Dishonesty conforms to the general character of sin, for it^{is} neither mere ignorance, nor conscious, deliberate lie. It is rather a strategy to convince the self against the self in the process of which others must be deceived and enlisted to undergird the self in believing what it cannot quite believe, being itself the author of the deception.

We have now noted various types, forms, and aspects of pride. We have, however, not yet spoken of the vital distinction between individual and collective pride in Niebuhr's view of man's sin. While it is true, strictly speaking, that only individuals are moral agents, it is necessary to make this distinction (1) because group organs of will achieve a certain authority over individuals (2) because pride is greater in the collective self.

Collective egotism is most consistently expressed through the state. For it has specific symbols of its reality which prompt a reverence for majesty and instruments of power that enable it to enforce its claims. The collective will of the state thus stands over and makes demands upon individual men. But it is also true that individuals, as members of the group, make more pretentious claims for themselves. They "join to set up a god whom each then severally and tacitly identifies with himself, to swell the chorus of praise which each then severally and tacitly arrogates to himself".¹ Since the nation really does

1 The Ethics of Power, Philip Leon, p. 140, quoted by Niebuhr in Human Nature, p. 212.

transcend the individual in majesty, the self in its extension as the state can make claims of unqualified or excessive significance more plausibly than is possible for the mere individual self. Furthermore, "in every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the need of others"¹ than is found in individuals in their more personal relations. Thus it is that pride, arrogance, hypocrisy, and ruthless injustice are greater within and among human collectives.

The only possible basis of understanding and opposing this idolatrous pride of collective man is, Niebuhr declares, "a religion of revelation in the faith of which a voice is heard from beyond all human majesties and a divine power is revealed in comparison with which 'the nations are as a drop in the bucket'"². This remains true despite the fact that a church which witnesses to such a faith has proved over again to be quite capable of making idolatrous claims for itself.

Whether considered as individuals or as groups, men are involved in the sin of claiming for themselves more than is justified in view of their being only parts of the total human family under God. But they are not, says Niebuhr, equally so. And it is as necessary to recognize differences in degrees of sin and guilt as it is to know that "all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

Nowhere is the necessity of a dialectical logic more pointed than on this issue. For an undue or wrongly understood emphasis upon

1 Introduction to Moral Man and Immoral Society, p. xv.

2 Human Nature, pp. 214-215.

the sinfulness of all men can be made to obscure these distinctions in history, however relative, upon which the difference between a tolerable and an intolerable situation may depend. It is just such a mistake that both orthodox protestantism and moralistic perfectionism have made with catastrophic consequences. Yet the opposite attitude - often connected with natural law theories, in catholicism and elsewhere, - of forgetting the equality of sin in an overemphasis upon the relative distinctions of history and of insinuating religious absolutes into contingent judgments - is also grievously wrong.

Sin is rebellion against God. Guilt is the objective historical consequence of sin. All men are in rebellion against God and in that sense equally sinful and may be equally guilty. But all men are not equally rebellious and sinful, and therefore there may be and often is inequality of guilt. Biblical-Christian faith insists that it is those who are most tempted, by favoured position, who are most sinful and most guilty.

"Wherever the fortunes of nature, the accidents of history or even the virtues of the possessors of power, endow an individual or a group with power, social prestige, intellectual eminence or moral approval above their fellows, there an ego is allowed to expand. It expands both vertically and horizontally. Its vertical expansion, its pride, involves it in sin against God. Its horizontal expansion involves it in an unjust effort to gain security and prestige at the expense of its fellows".¹

This^{is} why prophetic strictures fall with special force upon the mighty and noble, the wise and the righteous. Thus the Bible knows how to distinguish the inequalities of sin and guilt, even as it also insists that

1 Ibid, p. ~~222~~226.

"all men have sinned".

Finally, in this discussion of Niebuhr's view of man as creature and sinner, we must speak of sensuality and of its relation to pride.

"When anxiety has conceived it brings forth pride and sensuality". Man may, as has been pointed out, try to escape the contradiction of finiteness and freedom by denying his finiteness in pride. He may, alternatively, seek to escape it by losing himself and his freedom in some aspect of finiteness, which is sensuality.

"If selfishness is the destruction of life's harmony by the self's attempt to center life around itself, sensuality would seem to be the destruction of harmony within the self, by the self's undue identification with and devotion to particular impulses and desires within itself".¹

Niebuhr shares the pauline-augustinian view that sensuality is derived from the more basic sin of pride. The self, having lost the true center of its life beyond itself is unable to maintain unity within itself, and thus loses control of its natural impulses. But is sensuality another kind of self-love, or is it an attempt to escape itself? It is both. It is at once an enhancement of the ego and a flight from it. This is true of all sensuality; it is particularly vivid in sexual sensuality, where nature's alteregoism provides a powerful basis which spirit uses both to assert the self and to escape the self in the deification of another. But the final degree of sensuality is reached when the self finds the deification of self and the deification of another intolerable, and tries to escape the tension and contradiction of life by a

1 Ibid, p. 228.

plunge into nothingness. Thus, "sensuality is always: (1) an extension of self-love to the point where it defeats its own ends: (2) an effort to escape the prison house of self by finding a god in a process or person outside the self: (3) finally an effort to escape from the confusion¹ which sin has created into some form of subconscious existence".

The Christian view of man, then, is that he is a sinner in contradiction to his own essential nature. The strategies of sin are therefore abortive, and add to the contingency of nature a contradiction of spirit. In other words, man's life, from the standpoint of the use he makes of his faculties and freedom, is tragic, - God's judgment standing against his selfish schemes and bringing his vain imagination¹ to nought.

4. Man as creature redeemed.

But, just as Christianity maintains that man's life is corrupted by sin and subject to judgment, so also it declares that redemption is possible by divine grace, as power and as pardon.

The law of man's life is love. He is not self-sufficient, being able to realise his potentialities only in loving relations with other human beings and with God. Yet man's life does not conform to its own law. Viewing the world from the perspective of self, he is betrayed into imagining himself the center of the world. Thus existence is not so much a harmony of life with life under the sovereignty of God as a disharmony produced by self-love. This is the egocentric predicament from which man must be saved.

But how is the pre-occupation with self to be broken? By an

¹ Ibid, p. 240.

effort of will? No. Because (1) the capacities of the self as nature with its survival impulse are not adequate to the demands of the self as free spirit (2) concentration on trying to free the self of its pre-occupation with itself is still pre-occupation with the self and tends rather to accentuate than to mitigate the problem (3) man's life, being centered beyond itself in God its source and end, must be possessed and fulfilled from beyond itself. Thus the necessity of divine grace for human salvation.

Yet, to insist upon the necessity of grace is not, says Niebuhr, to say that man brings nothing to the experience of salvation and is wholly determined from above. For if, as has been maintained, sin however serious is not able to destroy man's essential nature, "it must follow that there is some inner testimony from the very character and structure of the human psyche against the strategy of sinful egotism... This is the 'point of contact' between grace and the natural endowments¹ of the soul..."

Having briefly noted the relevance but insufficiency of man's natural powers for salvation, we must consider the nature of grace as power not our own and its relation to man's natural resources.

The Christian doctrine of grace is the answer to the problem posed in the doctrine of original sin. Man, a unity of body and spirit created in the image of God, is unable to do the good that he intends. He must be enabled or empowered to do it. This means that all ration-

1 The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II, p. 117.

alistic or mystic schemes of salvation are ruled out, for they rest upon a mind-body dualism which hopes to extend the range of mind to a universality where all vitality, power, and finally the particularised self ^{are} ~~is~~ lost. Since man is a unity of nature and spirit, he is subject to power as well as to mind. And his difficulty is not so much ignorance as impotence: "The good that I would that I do not". Thus, when the self has been lifted out of its self-centeredness, it must attribute the event to an invasion of spirit from without.

All power that comes from without to possess the self may not, however, be simply saving power. If not, such power and spirit, "Greater than the self in its empiric reality but not great enough to do justice to the self in its ultimate freedom, can be most simply defined as demonic".¹ A lover, a family, a state, a race, even a church - all these and many others can draw the self out of itself. Yet the true self, soaring above all earthbound things in its freedom, cannot find fulfillment in them. The truth is that nothing less than the Holy Spirit, of which Christ as love is the criterion, is adequate for the spirit and need of man.

To be possessed by the Holy Spirit means to receive an accretion of power which man does not have by himself. This is to say that the Holy Spirit is not merely the highest level of the human spirit. It is the indwelling spirit of God. Yet that indwelling spirit does not destroy the human spirit; nay, it fulfils it. But it is the true self which is fulfilled.

¹ Ibid, pp. 110-111.

Now the real self obviously cannot be established unless the old, unreal and sinful self has been shattered. Such a shattering of the sinful self occurs whenever it is confronted by God in Christ, "after the flesh" or as "hidden", in such a way that it becomes conscious of its sin¹ and of the true source, center, and end of its life. This is the experience of repentance and faith. They are two aspects of the same reality and one cannot be said to be logically or chronologically prior to the other. For without repentance the self could not rise to faith; and without faith there could be no repentance. But with them comes a rebirth of the real self and power for newness of life.

Thus, finite things which, when absolutized, are demonic and destructive, may otherwise become means of grace. It is true, of course, as has been said, that the self cannot find complete fulfillment in anything less than the Holy Spirit. This is not to say, however, that man does not realize himself in relation to these things or that the Holy Spirit is not mediated by them. Indeed, the natural endowments and experiences of man are aspects of life which, though alone insufficient for salvation, may be the means of it, once charged with the force of special grace. They include the gregarious impulse, paternal and filial affection; reason which knows that existence is not essence and imagines (if not implements) more inclusive harmonies; the influence of traditions, especially that of the Christian community itself; commitments and habits of life; the challenge of a cause; the concatenation of circumstance; the

1 See Ibid, p. 109.

suffering of body or frustration of spirit and purpose. All these the Holy Spirit can and does use in moving the self to repentance and faith. The self, for its part, is not inanimate or merely passive under external pressure; indeed, it must actively affirm the movement of grace. Yet, when its self-centeredness has been broken and it stands beyond the contradictions of sin in faith, the self knows that it is by a "miracle" wherein a given event or aspect of experience has become a special channel of empowering grace. Thus is shown the truth of both human freedom and divine grace:

"The real situation is that both affirmations - that only "God in Christ can break and reconstruct the sinful self, and that "the self must 'open the door' and is capable of doing so - are "equally true; and they are unqualifiedly true, each on their "own level. Yet either affirmation becomes false if it is made "without reference to the other."¹

In divine grace as power, then, lies the possibility of newness of life. Because of it, there are in fact indeterminate possibilities of fulfillment, both individual and collective. "There is no limit...; except of course the one limit, that there will be some corruption, as well as deficiency, of virtue and truth on the new level of achievement".²

To note this "one limit", it must now be observed, is to be aware of the necessity of justification and to know God's grace, not only as power, but as pardon. Such awareness is not a possibility of natural man, and is not to be validated or refuted by natural experience. It is

1 Ibid, p. 118.

2 Ibid, p. 150.

only by faith, whereby man stands beyond himself and knows that the Lord is God, that he can either apprehend (if not comprehend) the truth which completes the structure of meaning, lay hold on empowering grace, or understand that he never ceases to require God's forgiveness. The doctrine of justification was not, as a matter of fact, arrived at inductively and speculatively in the history of culture, and cannot be so attained. It can only be known in faith existentially, that is, by being confronted by God in Christ, shattered in one's self-esteem, and reconstructed. But once known, the principle of grace as pardon can be applied to and validated by common experience: in the impartiality of nature, the slow processes of judgment in history, the general transmutation of evil into good, the actual dependence of mutual love upon self-giving love. It can further be seen to be, not in contradiction to, but as supporting, the notion of grace as power - in the sense that life can be truly completed only as it knows it cannot complete itself or arrive, even by grace as power, at completion in history. Yet the knowledge of grace as pardon does not necessarily mean a life consistent with it; for self-love can claim justification as a possession and generate new pride. It is a part of the genius and profundity of Christianity that it includes this knowledge of resistance to its own truth, and is illustrated and validated by the very rejection of itself. But, without Christian pre-suppositions, such illustration is not apparent nor such validation discerned. In other words, only a faith which measures the full depths of sin can understand the final necessities of grace.

Niebuhr admits that there has been practically as much resistance to the Christian doctrine of grace as pardon within the bounds of faith as outside it. The pre-Christian ages "expected a Christ but not the Christ who would vindicate God in his justice and mercy without including any man in that vindication. The Christian ages seek a new way¹ of vindicating men who have become righteous through Christ". The predicament of man is that he stands in and yet above finitude; his sin is to pretend to have escaped, or to be able to escape, from this predicament. Obviously a faith which knows of God's concern for men can be egoistically corrupted into reinforcing this pretension, and this is exactly what has happened in much of Christian history. Thus the logic of sin persists in the saints, and is prior to any specific theological expression of it. The actual bases of the weakening or denial of the doctrine of grace as pardon have varied. In Hellenistic forms of the faith, God is thought to have become man in order that man might become God; and that, Christ having bridged the chasm between the eternal and the temporal, it remains only for man through knowledge of Him to rise to the eternal. The central issue, in other words, was thought to be that of time-eternity and not that of sin and grace at all. In more Hebraic forms of Christianity, the basic issue is always understood as sin and grace; and grace is recognized to include the double pauline emphasis on justification and sanctification. Yet the augustinian-thomist doctrine has talked of forgiveness in baptism for sins that are past and has made justification

1 Ibid, p. 127.

merely the prelude to sanctification by empowering grace through the sacraments. Absolute perfection¹ is of course not claimed; but rather that the converted, receiving the sacraments, may live, not without venial or incidental sin. but without mortal sin, and that there is no basic contradiction between the souls of the faithful and the will of God. The crucial question is, therefore, simply one of fact: is this true or is it not? The Renaissance and modern views have believed, even more simply than Catholicism, that it is true. The Reformation declared that it is not; and Niebuhr agreed.

"The pride of a bishop, the pretensions of a theologian, the "will-to-power of a pious business man, and the spiritual arrogance of the church itself are not merely incidental defects; not merely "venial sins. They represent the basic drive of self-love, "operating upon whatever new level grace has pitched the new life".¹

Thus, man remains, not merely finite and in process - which even the sanctificationists admit - but in basic contradiction to the divine will, as much in need of forgiveness at the end as at the beginning of sinful existence or moral striving.

The breadth and depth of the Christian experience of grace as power and as pardon is, Niebuhr thinks, succinctly put, and can be neatly summarized, in a pauline text, beginning: "I am crucified with Christ". The sinful, self-centered self is confronted and shattered by God in Christ. "Nevertheless I live". The whole self, now liberated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, rises to newness of life. "Yet not I; but Christ liveth in me". Though it is the self that lives anew, it is by

1 Ibid, p. 137.

the power of Christ that it does so; yet also, only by faith, for there is a continuing sin and therefore a continuing need of forgiveness, to the end of history.

The final fulfillment of life must therefore lie beyond history, not merely because of the incompleteness of finitude and the height of human freedom, but also because the corruption of sin must be purged and overcome.

"Beyond" history is perhaps a less satisfactory term than "at the end" of history. For the fulfillment of life, though transcending history, must also, obviously, be intimately related to history. "At the end" signifies the Christian sense that, on the one hand, life cannot be completed within the conditions of nature-history, and, on the other hand, that the Kingdom of God fulfills and does not negate historical existence. Thus does Christianity refute both utopianism and other worldliness.

The hope that life will be fulfilled is a justified hope, Niebuhr believes, because life actually does point beyond itself to an eternal ground. But, just because it is "beyond" or to the "end" that it points, there can be no exact knowledge or literal description of the fulfillment of life. Every idea of fulfillment, which by definition transcends experience, must, like all other notions that relate man to God, the historical to the trans-historical, be mythical or symbolic rather than rational, and thus may be essentially though not exhaustively true. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Yet, since we do know what life is essentially, we can project essentially what its ful-

fillment must be.

Life points beyond itself as finite and free. It transcends itself, yet is unable to complete itself by its own power. The freedom by which it transcends itself opens the possibility, however, of trying to complete itself by its own power, or falsely. Thus, the problem of human weakness is complicated by the pretension of strength, or finiteness by sin. Since life contradicts itself, mere development of what it is cannot complete it. And, since it is a unity of body and spirit, it cannot be divided so that an immortal part is released from a mortal part and absorbed into the divine. This in any case could only annihilate man. "His hope consequently lies in a forgiveness which will overcome not his finiteness but his sin, and a divine omnipotence which will complete his life without destroying its essential nature."¹

C. The Movement of History.

1. The meaning of life and the meaning of history.

Niebuhr distinguishes three types of historical interpretation. One affirms the meaning of life but does not include history in the realm of meaning. Another equates the meaning of life with the meaning of history - either as reduced to nature or as a self-fulfilling process. The third asserts that the meaning of life includes but transcends history. Biblical Christianity is in the third category.

Religions and cultures which do not include history in the realm of meaning have no messianic expectation. For them, a Christ is not possible because the temporal-historical is not thought able to

¹ Beyond Tragedy, p. 306.

receive eternal disclosures and fulfillment; and he is not necessary because there is believed to be in man already that which can raise him above nature - history to the realm of eternal significance. Thus, to the Greeks, Christ, being an answer to a question that is not asked, is "foolishness". But religions and cultures which equate the meaning of life with the meaning of history do not expect a Christ either. For, if they reduce history to nature, meaning itself is denied; and, if they see history as a self-fulfilling process, it is its own Christ and need not expect one. Only those religions and cultures which believe that the meaning of life includes but transcends history are messianic. For, knowing that history points beyond itself, they look for a fuller disclosure and completion of meaning from beyond - they expect a Christ.

It will be necessary to examine a little more closely Niebuhr's interpretation of the "logic" of messianic expectation, as it developed in Hebrew-Christian history. There are three levels of messianism: pre-prophetic, prophetic, and Christian.

In the first type, pre-prophetic or egoistic-naturalistic^{ion} messianism, the problem of life is regarded primarily as the threat to meaning in the disadvantage of the nation as against its foes. As a consequence, messianic hope is expressed in terms of the eventual subjection of those foes and of the establishment of the power and glory of the nation. The egoistic element is explicitly present on this level: yet it is never wholly overcome on the other and higher levels, even when (as in Christian concepts of history) it is disavowed in principle.

In prophetic messianism, the problem is no longer nationalis-

tic, but ethical and universalistic: the threat to the good forces of history by the evil forces. The messianic hope therefore is for a "shepherd-king" who will combine power and goodness and establish the good forces of history. This is a profound conception which refutes both false interpretations of history and non-historical religions and cultures. It refutes the latter in insisting that the basic problem of life is not finiteness but sin and that history must be redeemed and not sloughed off. It corrects the former in seeing that no force in history is adequate to the task of redemption and that the shepherd-king must therefore be more than purely historical. The weakness in the notion of the shepherd-king lies in thinking the divine power can be no less good for occupying a particular place of power in history. There was, however, beneath the problem of the evil forces of history and the shepherd-king answer to this problem, a deeper dimension in prophetic messianism which was gradually articulated. "The assurance that God will complete history by overcoming the ambiguity of the momentary triumph of evil yields to the question of how God will complete history by overcoming the perennial evil in every human good."¹ This was the final prophetic problem for which traditional messianism had, and apocalypticism found, no answer.

Niebuhr declares that it is necessary to note why this problem was not answered if we are to understand why Christ was a "stumbling-block" to the Jews. For one thing, this ultimate problem of history - that all men fall short - was subordinated by the pressure of the

1 Human Destiny, p. 30.

penultimate problem of Hebrew experience - that their "jailors" were worse than they. But even more important was the fact that the prophetic perception of the ultimate problem was an affront to human self-righteousness. In the apocalyptic writings, where non-Christian messianism culminates, there is to be sure a certain ambiguity; for while it was known that there were no righteous worthy of triumph, it was nevertheless insisted that the end of history would indicate both God and the righteous. Thus, even when known, the final problem was not really faced.

Christian messianism represents both a completion and a correction of Hebraic messianism. Jesus himself reinterpreted its basic ideas, and the Christian community drew the final conclusions of this reinterpretation after His death.

In the debate within Hebraic religion between messianism and legalism, Jesus stood on the side of messianism. He rejected legalism as an adequate disclosure of the divine purpose in history and as a means of fulfilling it. No "law" can state the final good of man, nor empower him to keep it. The freedom of man is higher and the problem of man is deeper than that - pointing, in fact, beyond or to the end of history for solution. But His messianism also contradicted traditional messianic notions, in so far as they were corrupted by egoistic-nationalistic elements, or tended to define the problem of history and the answer to it in too simply moral terms. The parable of the Last Judgment - by the very fact of a last judgment, and by the maintenance of the distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous - retains the prophetic-moral element. Yet, it also adds the significant note that those who are

vindicated know they have not fulfilled the law of life and are contrite (even as those who are condemned believe themselves to be righteous).

This, then, was the first rock of offence in Jesus' interpretation of messianism: an affront to the pride of ^{the} nation and even more to the pride of man as man. But there was yet another offence: that "The Son of Man must suffer". The traditional notion of Messiah or Son of Man had been one of triumph; while the suffering servant idea had most probably concerned Israel's mission and triumph in the world through suffering.

Jesus combined and reinterpreted these two conceptions, declaring that the representative of God must suffer in order to reveal and fulfill the meaning of history. He neither suggests that vicarious suffering gradually triumphs in history, not yet that history remains purely tragic; but rather that the representative of God will fulfill essential meaning at the "end" of history. "Thus Jesus our reinterpretation of messianism contains the two offensive ideas that the righteous are unrighteous in the final judgment and that God's sovereignty over history is established and His triumph over evil is effected not by the destruction of the evil doers but by his own bearing of the evil."¹ His reinterpretation was indeed offensive to the Jews in His day and led to their rejection of Him; but its perennial offensiveness to man is abundantly shown by the resistance to it throughout Christian history. It has been a perpetual "stumbling block" in fact, even within the community which accepted it in principle.

There is a final point of crucial importance in Jesus' own view of the "end" of history. It is suggested in the double emphasis: the

1 Ibid, p. 46.

Kingdom has come, and the Kingdom is coming. There is one sense in which the divine sovereignty over history has been revealed and established: there is another in which its fulfillment awaits a second manifestation of divine power. Jesus seems, in combining the "suffering servant" and the "Son of Man" ideas in interpreting history, to have connected the "suffering servant" with his first coming and the "Son of man" with the second. In such an interpretation, history becomes an "interim" in which there are both realizations of life's true meaning and continuing contradictions to it. But the absolute character of Jesus' ethic is not, Niebuhr declares, due, as Albert Schweitzer holds, to the illusion of His proximate return. It is due rather to the actual character of man whose freedom can take its "law" only from the absolute and final reality, God. Thus does Jesus understand and reveal life's true meaning, but also, that in history, between His first and second coming, there is a conformity to and violation of it.

The revelation in Christ is not however complete until the epic of His life is closed and the history of expectation culminates in a community of faith which understands and accepts Him. To the Greeks Christ crucified was foolishness, because they had no problem for which He was the answer. To the Jews He was a stumbling block, because, though they looked for a Christ, He was not the kind they had expected. But to them that were called, He was the wisdom of God and the power of God.

What, Niebuhr asks, is the specific content of this revelation in Christ? It is the Atonement, the final indication of the relation

between judgment and mercy in God's attitude toward man in his rebellion. The prophets had been certain of judgment; they had even known of mercy. But they were not sure how they were related to one another. Christian faith entered the world with the affirmation that what had formerly been partially revealed and partially concealed has now been clarified and established. Divine judgment was understood not to preclude divine forgiveness; and forgiveness not to obviate judgment. In the suffering of Christ it was discovered that God "has a resource¹ of mercy beyond His love and judgment but (that) He can make it effective only as He takes the consequences of His wrath and judgment, upon and into Himself... The wrath of God is then world in its essential structure (as law) reacting against the sinful corruption of that structure... The mercy of God represents the ultimate freedom of God above His own law; but not the freedom to abrogate the law." Thus, the doctrine of the Atonement is consistent with and the culmination of Jesus' own teaching (which fulfilled and negated the logic of messianism) that the Son of Man must suffer and give His life as a ransom for many. It is the Christian answer to the final problem of life.

The Atonement as the significant content of the Incarnation is, says Niebuhr, an insight of faith rather than a conclusion of reason. That is to say, it was not reached by a cumulation of knowledge in the history of culture and cannot be attained individually by merely taking thought; but only as the self-disclosure of God in Christ is apprehend-

1 Ibid, pp. 55-56.

ed and appropriated by faith. Nor is it something that one apprehends once and for all. Rather, it must be constantly appropriated inwardly if the wisdom of God in Christ is also to become the power of God unto salvation.

Rationalistic theologies misconstrue the situation. Preoccupied with the problem of finiteness rather than sin, they tend to think of the significance of Christ in terms of the Incarnation which bridges the chasm between the infinite and the finite rather than in terms of the Atonement which speaks of sinful man's reconciliation with a holy God. Christ as the wisdom of God is thereby reduced to metaphysical truths open to reason, and is not at all the power of God that comes to those whose self-esteem has been shattered by confrontation with the crucified Christ. Thus, the identity of wisdom and power in Christ is obscured. But so, also, is the difference between wisdom and power. For, subsuming power under wisdom and assuming the sufficiency of wisdom, the problem of life is prematurely solved; whereas, a more adequate form of Christianity knows of sin and that, despite Christ even as power, it remains as a perennial fact of historical existence. All this suggests the basic error of rationalistic theologies. But there is another: the attempt to comprehend the significance of Christ in rational categories rather than to point to it mythically. Thus, the abortive effort is made to define Christ as both conditioned and unconditioned; rather than to regard Him as the symbol of the reality that bears history.

In correcting the errors of rationalism and asserting the primacy of faith, Niebuhr does not intend to deny the relevance of reason or

the continuity between culture and faith. "This is to say that while 'Heilgeschichte' is not merely an aspect of general history, nor its natural culmination, neither is it a completely separate history."¹ Since man transcends himself, and since sin however serious cannot destroy his essential nature, he has and retains a certain capacity for truth and God. This makes possible that expectation of a Christ without which the Christ could not have been accepted - something which remains true despite the fact that the true Christ is not expected nor quite credible when He comes. Furthermore, once the revelation of God in Christ has been accepted, it illuminates the whole of experience and is validated by experience.

Illustrative of the relation between revelation and reason is the analogy of the knowledge men have of one another. Men know what they know of each other by observing behaviour, and also by comprehending the depth in the other spirit in terms drawn from knowledge of themselves. But, in so far as behaviour is incomplete as a basis of knowledge; in so far as behaviour betrays ambivalence; in so far as the depth of spirit in the other is interpreted egoistically and falsely by the self; there is needed a "word" of self-disclosure from the other person. And when it is given, it actually completes incompleteness, clarifies obscurities, and corrects falsifications. All this suggests, says Niebuhr, what is even more true of the relation between what men know of God by observation and interpretation and what they know by His own self-disclosure.

1 Ibid, pp. 63-63.

In a word, the relation between revelation and reason, between faith and culture, is paradoxical.

2. The possibilities and the limits of history.

The Christian faith, which regards Christ as the Son of Man and the revelation of the character of God, also believes that He is the "second Adam", the disclosure of essential man. The possibilities of history have already been said to be determined by the nature of man as *imago dei*, and - sin and repentance presupposed - by God's grace as power; while the limits of history have been described as finiteness, and as sin as a perennial category of history requiring God's grace as pardon. It is Christ - particularly in His love on the Cross - who is the actual criterion of these possibilities and limits. We shall elaborate them - primarily now from the ethical standpoint.

"To say that the innocence of Adam before the fall can be restored only in terms of the perfection¹ of Christ is to assert that life can approach its original innocence only by aspiring to its ultimate end." History is suspended between nature and eternity. It moves from the perfection of innocence or the harmony of life without freedom, through creativity and destructiveness within freedom, toward that perfection of the Kingdom where free wills are related harmoniously to one another beneath the sovereignty of God. To define the possibilities and limits of history in terms of the first and second Adam is thus to recognize on the one hand that part of the norm of man's life is given in the harmony of nature, but also to see that the freedom of man¹ transcends not only nature but his own history and to know

1 Ibid, p. 77.

that his final "law" can be taken only from the perfection of Christ which transcends history and enters it only to be crucified. Such an approach obviously distinguishes Christian ethics fundamentally both from naturalistic and romantic-primitivistic ethics which seek to derive man's law purely from nature or lead him back to nature for fulfillment, and from rationalistic and mystical ethics which make gnosis rather than love toward God and man his norm and finally extricate him from the stuff of nature-history to lose him in an undifferentiated eternity. Man being neither a unity without freedom, nor freedom without vitality, the law of his life must be derived from a God who is transcendent over, and immanent in, the world; and the possibilities and limits of history must be understood from the standpoint of a "sacrificial love" that bears a dialectical or paradoxical relation to "mutual love".

The perfection of Christ is the "impossible possibility"¹ of history. It is impossible because it cannot maintain itself in history and becomes sacrificial love. It is possible in the double sense that (1) man is able if he chooses to refuse to participate in the push-and-pull of competing egos and to sacrifice himself (assuming that he measures life by faith or in transhistorical terms and knows that he who loses his life may gain it in heaven) (2) though disinterested love cannot justify itself as historical strategy, it can and does support mutual love which is able to justify or maintain itself in history. In the realm of ethics, sacrificial love is related to mutual love as, in the realm of truth, revelation

1 See, for instance, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, Chapter IV.

is related to reason.

Sacrificial love completes the incompleteness of mutual love and defines its possibilities; for the self cannot achieve even mutual relations if it is dominated by a demand for reciprocity and a fear that it may not be given. Mutuality must, in other words, be a by-product not an intended consequence, and for this an element of disinterested venturesomeness is necessary. Disinterested love presupposed, however, the possibilities of mutual love are indeterminate (save only for the final limit that life cannot survive in fallen nature or history without some egoistic concern and calculation) and the agape of the Kingdom of God is therefore a very great resource for the fulfillment of life in history.

Sacrificed love also clarifies obscurities and defines the limits of mutual love. Whether, or to what extent, a transcendent norm is historically practicable is a perennial problem of ethics. There is a frequent tendency to regard it as a simple possibility, and to imagine that through grace (as in sanctificationist Christianity) or through education (as in liberalism) or through revolution (as in marxism) mutuality can be extended without limit. In terms of the Cross, however, it is apparent that there is a limit, and that sacrificed love cannot finally be transmuted into successful strategy.

Finally, sacrificial love corrects falsifications and refutes pretensions. Mutual love is a compound of egoism and righteousness which claims to be less egoistic and more righteous than it is. The Christian insight is unique in setting it under the Cross and discovering that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Thus, the law of life is neither a simple possibility nor yet an irrelevant impossibility, but is related to history as God is related to the world - that is, dialectically.

3. Interpretations within Christendom.

It is only occasionally, Niebuhr thinks, that this relation of the law of love to history, or the more general paradox of grace as power and as pardon, is understood in Christendom outside the New Testament. This means that the balanced view of the possibilities and limits of history in biblical principles of interpretation has usually been destroyed, from one side or the other - the possibility or the limits being overestimated or underestimated. The most frequent error has of course been sanctificationist, in some form or other; only in the Reformation was it overcome in principle, but at the price of the opposite error of historical defeatism.

"The theologies which have sought to do justice to the fact that saints nevertheless remain sinners have frequently, perhaps usually, obscured the indeterminate possibilities of realizations of good in both individual and collective life. The theologies which have sought to do justice to the positive aspects of regeneration have usually obscured the realities of sin which appear on every new level of virtue."¹

This serious, general indictment of Christendom is defended and illustrated in an extensive analysis, a summary of which may be useful here in further illuminating Niebuhr's interpretation of history and as a background of his call for a "new synthesis".

In Hellenistic Christianity - comprising roughly the patristic

1 Human Destiny, p. 125.

age, and extending in Eastern Orthodoxy, in certain areas of Anglicanism, and, slightly modified, in certain aspects of Renaissance spirituality¹ to the present day - there has been a gnostic element which regarded the significance of Christianity as a bridging of the gap between the divine and the human and a translation of the believer, via knowledge, from temporality to eternity. There was not an explicit repudiation of the more Hebraic, biblical notions of sin, grace, and justification: rather, simply an appropriation of and emphasis upon that in Christianity which corresponds to Greek problems and concepts. But, in interpreting the nature of man dualistically and rationalistically, it tended to fulfil life in individual terms prematurely (if finally to negate it), while history itself was abandoned.

In Roman Catholicism, the Hellenic spirit has had its victories, yet there has also been a strong Hebraic element. More specifically, man is understood in his volitional as well as rational aspects, and thus not merely wisdom but power is seen to be necessary to salvation. It is primarily in the unbalancing of the biblical paradox of grace by the subordination of justification to sanctification that Catholicism has erred. The notion of forgiveness as applying to sins that are past is of early origin. It was present in St. Augustine as well and became definitive for the Catholic conception of life through him. The subordination of justification to sanctification means simply that there is no serious contradiction in the life of the redeemed, either as individuals or as the church. Thus, the possibilities of history were

1 Niebuhr accepts Harnack's practical identification of Hellenism with Gnosticism. See Ibid, p. 152.

overestimated in Catholicism, at least in individualistic and ecclesiastical terms. On the other hand, the identification of the church with the Kingdom of God made for a static conception of history; while the control of the order of culture by the church severely restricted the process of secular development.

The medieval synthesis, which thus held together in arrested form the truths of justification and sanctification, was dissolved from two sides by the Renaissance and Reformation. They represent a double movement of dissolution which partly diverged and partly converged. They diverged in the sense that, while the Renaissance was asanctificationist in principle and proximate in interest, the Reformation was justificationist in principle and ultimate in interest. They converged because both opposed the same pretentious institution which claimed to dispense truth and grace and finally to control the historical situation.

Renaissance spirituality is distinctively marked by its creative impulse toward, but fatuous expectation of, the fulfillment of the possibilities of life in history. On both its sectarian side and its secular side it destroyed the paradox of justification and sanctification by giving up the truth of justification. In sectarianism the principle of grace as power necessary for fulfillment was retained - by the pietistic sects in individual terms, and by the radical sects in socio-historical-apocalyptic terms. In secularism, however, the notion of grace as power (as well as grace as pardon) was abandoned. Thus Renaissance spirituality represents a return to the classical confidence in rational man. Yet, it adds to this the biblical sense of the dynamic meaningfulness of history -

stripped of course of its tragic aspect and its insistence that the final fulfillment of life can only be beyond history. The idea of progress is thus the typical Renaissance and modern (since the Renaissance spirit has dominated modernity) interpretation of history.

If the Renaissance objection to the medieval synthesis was that it was too pessimistic, the Reformation found it too optimistic. It rescued the truth of justification implicit in prophetism and explicit in Paulinism from its subordination to sanctification in Catholicism. In the history of culture, the Reformation represents the victory of Hebraism over Hellenism. In the history of religion it means a profound awareness that the saints and the church as well as the world stand under God's judgment and require his mercy on every level of achievement. This final truth of Christianity it appreciates in principle with a depth and power unknown outside the New Testament (though to be sure it had its own ways of contradicting the principle - as for instance, in Luther's understanding of agape as a supra-moral, ecstatic, individualistic transcendence over history, or in Calvin's bibliolatry). But, knowing the principle, it yet failed to relate it adequately to all the proximate problems or to understand the full scope of historical possibilities. And it was this that helped, along with the basic pride of man and the particular mood of modernity, to encompass its defeat as an historical force.

Anglicanism is neither Hellenic nor Roman Catholic, neither of the Renaissance nor the Reformation. It has rather its own content - at its best able to combine and express the paradox of grace better than other churches, but at its worst merely a distinctive combination of

errors and traditional piety.

It is upon the basis of this sweeping historical analysis that Niebuhr sets forth the necessity for, and the broad outline of, a "new synthesis"¹. This new synthesis must, he says, go beyond the medieval synthesis, for, in uniting Hellenism and prophetism, the basic paradox of grace was partly expressed and partly violated on both sides. And it must combine those insights of Renaissance and Reformation which, exploring the breadth and depth of life beyond the scope of the old synthesis, yet obscured one or the other side of the paradox. The construction of the new synthesis, therefore, involves relating the gospel to history more dialectically than ever before in Christendom. It means vigorously affirming "that history fulfils and negates the kingdom of God; that grace is continuous with, and in contradiction to, nature; that Christ is what we ought to be and also what we cannot be; that the power of God is in us and that the power of God is against us in judgment and in mercy"².

The building of such a synthesis is, Niebuhr thinks, the major task that confronts the church in our time, and, though it may know it not, the world as well.

4. The fulfillment of history and of life.

Just as the Christian faith is aware that "man knows himself truly only as he knows himself as confronted by God", so is it also aware that history can be understood only as by faith the eternal power and

1 Ibid, particularly pp. 204-212.

2 Ibid, p. 204.

purpose that bears it is discerned. From the standpoint of such a faith, history is seen to be the frustration as well as the realization of the meaning of life, and thus to point beyond itself.

We must go further now to note that an adequate interpretation of historical frustration and realization depends upon an appreciation of the double relation of eternity to time. Eternity stands both over time and at the end of time, and in each case, bears a dialectical relation to it. In so far as man's freedom is the basis of, and is directed toward, historical activity, he faces the eternity at the end of time, even as, also, the process of history itself moves toward that end with its cumulative meanings. In so far as the freedom of man transcends socio-historical process he faces the eternity which is above time. If the significance of history is viewed only from the standpoint of the eternity above history, the double fact that the individual realizes himself in social process and that the process itself has cumulative meaning is not recognized. If, conversely, the significance of history is viewed solely from the standpoint of the eternity at the end of time, the transcendent freedom of man is denied and the variety and richness of history are lost. History is full of pluralistic diversification. Myriads of individuals "have their day and cease to be"; nations, empires, civilisations and cultures are born, grow great, decline, and die - not merely from natural causes but because they bring destruction upon themselves by sin. These largely transient elaborations of history must obviously have their primary, though not their sole, meaning in the eternity that is above every moment of time. "The vast society of

historic organisms... are as certainly a testimony to the divine providence under which they have grown, as their destruction is a vindication of the eternal judgment, which they are unable to defy with impunity".¹ But there is a unity of history too - a unity between civilizations both in time or length and in space or breadth. There is a cumulative continuum in history which pitches experience on ever new levels and moves, like the meaning in the life of individuals, toward the "end", that is, toward both fulfillment and dissolution. Thus, "the problem (of life) is that the end as finis is a threat to the end as telos".² Yet, it is immeasurably complicated by the corruption of telos by man's false eternal. And so it is that, since man partly conforms to and partly contradicts the purpose of God, the fulfillment of life at the "end" must both confirm and negate the stuff of history.

Niebuhr understands the New Testament idea of the "end" of history in terms of the three symbols of the return of Christ, the last judgment, and the resurrection.

The eternity that is over time is, in a sense, the eternity that is disclosed in the first coming of Christ, while the eternity that is at the end of time is the eternity that fulfils the meaning of the historical process in the second coming of Christ. Thus, history is an interim between the disclosure and the fulfillment of meaning, in which there are both contradictions and realizations. To say that Christ the suffering Messiah will come again in power and glory is to declare that the contra-

1 Ibid, p. 305.

2 Ibid, p. 287.

dictions will be overcome and that "existence cannot ultimately defy its own norm",¹ To describe His second coming as an event that will both fulfil and terminate history is, furthermore, to refute utopianism and other-worldliness. For it means, on the one hand, that the consummation of life lies ^{be} beyond the conditioning of nature-history, and on the other, that the consummation fulfils rather than annuls the essence of the historical process.

The last judgment has three facets: (1) It suggests, in representing Christ as the judge of history, that man is judged in terms of his own ideal possibility, and not for being finite. (2) It underlines the importance of the distinctions between good and evil in history, however relative, yet restrains human claims on behalf of them in suggesting they can finally be assessed only by God. (3) It expresses the sense that history does not solve its own problems but cumulates them. The creative principle, the logos or Christ, is in history as the law of its life. But existence does not conform to this law; and, sin presupposed, every enhancement of the potency of being involves an increase in both good and evil. The anti-Christ is therefore precisely the final and greatest evil of history. Yet evil has no independent reality or development, but rather presupposes and draws upon the power of good. If, in its final expression, it explicitly defies that good, it is the anti-Christ of the sinners; if it claims to be that good, it is the anti-Christ of the saints. Thus, there is no resolution of the contra-

1 ~~Beyond Tragedy, xxx24.~~ Ibid, p. 290.

dictions of history within history. "The anti-Christ who appears at the¹ end of history can be defeated only by the Christ who ends history".

The resurrection of the body is the final Christian symbol of the fulfillment of life. Unlike the notion of the immortality of the soul, which implies an inherent capacity in man to survive death, the idea of the resurrection frankly admits human limits and declares man's dependence on the power of God. But it also affirms, more indubitably than the notion of immortality, that history will be fulfilled in its essence - a unity of nature and spirit. A general resurrection at the last day, further, preserves the variety of elaboration by individuals which, though rooted primarily in the eternity above time, is nevertheless necessary to the culmination of the historical process - even as the individuals themselves cannot know the final fulfillment of life without participating in that historical culmination. Thus, the idea of the resurrection takes account both of the individual's organic relation to nature and his fellows and of the freedom that transcends all natural-historical realities. It affirms that life's incompleteness will be completed in essence. But, in pointing to a completion beyond the perennial corruptions of existence, it declares that there must be a purging of history as well, and that final fulfillment is therefore a "completion of its essence by an annihilation of the contradictions which sin has introduced into human life".²

Ibid.

1 Human Destiny, p. 319.

2 Beyond Tragedy, p. 24.

5. Conclusion.

Having now set forth the dialectical and the thomist versions of the Christian interpretation of history in their basic principles, we must now go on to compare and contrast the two, at the same time further developing their respective views of man and historical movement.

CHAPTER III

Critical Treatment

A. The Common Ground of Distinctive Christian Notions.

The debate we are now about to join is, it must be remembered, a debate between Christians and within a Christian reference. It would be well at the start, therefore, to recall, in terms of the interpretation of history, the common ground that both unites Christians and distinguishes Christianity from an other-worldliness which can find no real significance in history and a utopianism which expects the fulfillment of life in history.

The distinctive character of Christian historical interpretation may be indicated by six propositions, which are as follows:

1. That history has its source, meaning, and destiny beyond itself;
2. That knowledge of the source, meaning, and destiny is possible, particularly in Christianity;
3. That history is part of a world essentially good because God made it;
4. That history is fallen and requires redemption;
5. That Christ is the unique focus of divine activity;
6. And that history, though a realm of meaning, is not the realm of completed meaning, which is at the "end" of history in the Kingdom of God.

B. The Disputed Ground.

It is only when more specific content is introduced into these general principles that differences arise among Christians, particularly now between Jacques Maritain and Reinhold Niebuhr.

1. A philosophy of being, and a myth of creation, judgment and redemption.

The more specific content, I shall maintain, is rooted in and determined by a primal decision about man which becomes the presupposition

of subsequent metaphysical and historical interpretation. This decision is no doubt based in part upon an inductive or empirical process of thought; and, once held as a presupposition issuing in interpretative principles, it may actually be reinforced by its plausibility in explaining or illuminating certain areas of fact and experience. Yet, it can neither be arrived at by a purely inductive process - since every process of induction presupposes some principle in terms of which facts are selected and related to each other - nor proved by subsequent appeal to experience - since experience is too limited to provide absolutely conclusive proof. Thus, thought is and remains rooted in a primordial decision. It is, in short, inescapably existential.

The crucial interpretative question between Maritain and Niebuhr is, then, the condition of man, or, more particularly - for the issue focuses here - the possibilities, limits, and role of reason. We shall shortly juxtapose the two views in some detail. But suffice it to say at the moment, that, for Maritain, the reason is less ⁱⁿadequate because of finiteness and less seriously impaired because of sin than for Niebuhr. Indeed, reason itself becomes the principle of interpretation for Maritain; while for Niebuhr the principle is one of faith which includes an explicit recognition of the inadequacy of reason, both as finite and as corrupted by sin.

The metaphysical consequences that follow upon the existential decision regarding the adequacy or inadequacy of reason may be suggested in terms of the notions of God, matter, man, and evil.

For thomism, being is a continuum that encompasses, and rises

from, first matter or pure potentiality to pure act, form, mind, or God. This hierarchy of being is also a hierarchy of value. Matter, though real, is inferior to mind. Man, in so far as he is material individuality, is inferior; but in so far as he is mind, he is superior. God, who is pure act, is as such the supreme value. He creates the world. He "is the sole supreme principle and the source of everything which exists, so far as it partakes of being..."¹ It will be noted that God, though the Creator of the world, is accorded supreme value as one of the principles of human existence, namely, the rational principle, raised to infinite proportions. It will also be observed that, since God is good, and creates everything so far as it has being, evil must, therefore, be merely the privation of being or the absence of good. Whatever else may be said about this thomist point of view, it has the virtue of consistency. The only question is whether it includes and accounts for the facts.

For dialectic, there is no simple continuum between God and the world or any aspect of it. Its principle of interpretation is not reason, and its God is not reason raised to the "'nth" power. Rather, it points to a mysterious God who is the source of both nature and reason, but is in no sense definable or even provable from the standpoint of either. God is mystery as well as meaning, the final mystery which clarifies the mystery of the world.² Nor is there, for dialectic, a hierarchy of being and of value. There is only Creator and created - the One valuable in

1 An Introduction to Phil. p. 20.

2 See Discerning the Signs of the Times, p. 154.

Himself, and the other - all of it equally - valuable as His work. Thus, man is understood as a unity of body and spirit, equally significant, and equally derived, dependent and weak, in mind and in body. As for evil, it is not regarded as merely the privation of being or the absence of good, but as the corruption of good - to be sure, negative in origin~~x~~ and parasitic in nature, but dynamic in effect. Did God, then, the Creator of the world, create the evil that exists in it? No. Evil is the product of the misuse of freedom by man and the devil, who yet remain finally under the dominion¹ of God. In this interpretation logically consistent and metaphysically satisfactory? Not entirely. Yet it has the merit of refusing to blink or deny facts because it cannot explain or fit them into preconceived logical categories. Niebuhr is in complete accord with Whitehead's point: "The defect of a metaphysical system is the very fact that it is a neat little system which thereby over-simplifies its expression of the world... In respect to its treatment of evil, Christianity is therefore less clear in its metaphysical idea but more inclusive of the facts".

We may, then, summarize the metaphysical consequences of the respective estimates of reason by saying that, if God is Creator of the world He cannot be interpreted simply in terms of anything within it, and that therefore thomism, a rationalist philosophy of being which attempts to do so, cannot attain to a Creator God transcendent as well as immanent, a process in which mind is absolutized, matter degraded, man dissected, and evil denied, whereas dialectic, not a rationalist philosophy of being

¹ Religion in the Making, p. 50.

but a myth of creation, judgment, and redemption, is able, upon the basis of a God not merely within but mysteriously beyond the world, to affirm the equal significance of the whole created order, the unity of man, and the reality of evil which yet remains within the purpose^{of}/a good God.

2. Differing Doctrines of Man in Summary.

We have mentioned that an existential decision about the condition of man leads to certain metaphysical consequences. It is indeed the point of departure for all further elaboration of the doctrine of man itself. We must now give this doctrine - so vital, since man is the direct subject of history - further attention, confronting, comparing and contrasting the thomist and dialectical points of view, first as general principles.

Both see man as imago dei. But one means by this a corporeal being whose most distinctive characteristic is the possession of intelligence or reason;¹ the other means by this a unity of body and spirit (including but surpassing reason) whose distinctive mark is self-transcendent freedom. Both see man as fallen. But one means by this a deprivation of "original righteousness" which leaves "natural justice" intact; the other means by this the corruption of man's nature from top to bottom but not its destruction. Both see man as requiring redemption. But one means by this a forgiveness for sins that are past and a gradual growth in sanctity by empowering grace through the sacraments of the church, without mortal sin; the other means by this grace as power and as pardon to the end of history for all men - considered either individually or collectively. Both believe in the final fulfillment of life

1 See An Introduction to Phil. p. 126.

at the "end" of history. But one means by this something quantitative - a Kingdom of God which is more than, but not different from, the faithful of the church; the other means by this something also qualitative - a Kingdom of God which negates as well as completes both church and world.

3. We must now spell out the meaning of these alternative views of the relation of man to God, of the historical to the eternal, in terms of the problem of truth, the problem of the good, and the problem of the Kingdom.

a. The Problem of Truth.

Man, as we have already noted, is regarded by thomism as having received at his creation both a natural endowment and a supernatural addition. The imago dei or the essential nature of man is contained within the natural endowment. This consists in man's substance¹ that in virtue of which he has existence - and those accidents which, while not identical with the substance, are nevertheless necessary to his being what he is - the principal accidents being understanding and the will which proceeds from it. The imago dei St. Thomas defines as "primarily intellectual nature", though he does assert, also, adding a more biblical element to his aristotelian rationalism, "that the whole human soul is in the whole human body... as God is in regard to the whole world".¹ Maritain likewise insists that man's "most distinctive characteristic is the possession of intelligence or reason";² that "the possession of this faculty (is) the principalissime property of human being".³

The supernatural addition given to man at creation included

1 Summa Theologicae, Part I, Question 93, Art. 3.

2 An Introduction to Phil. p. 126.

3 The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 250.

the means of orienting himself toward God and his final end, and also the privilege of corporeal immortality.

"The rectitude (of the primitive state) consisted in his reason "being subject to God, the lower powers to reason and the body to "the soul; and the first subjection was the cause of both the second "and the third. Now it is clear that such a subjection was not from "nature; otherwise it would have remained after sin... Hence it is "clear that also the primitive subjection by virtue of which reason "was subject to God was not merely a natural gift but a supernatural "endowment of grace."¹

Nor was corporeal immortality a natural gift. It too was "a supernatural force given by God to the soul whereby it was enabled to preserve the body from corruption so long as it remained itself subject to God..."²

Thus, even in a state of innocence, there were two dimensions in man: an essential nature with a capacity for the natural, and a non-essential addition with a capacity for the eternal.

In the fall, man - according to thomism - retained the first but lost the second. He ceased to be connatural with God in knowledge, lost the capacity for the so-called theological virtues, and was deprived of the privileges of corporeal immortality (the first two, though not the third, being subsequently restored by grace³). But the essential nature of man - though wounded by deprivation - was not lost or even in itself corrupted. His natural endowment remained and with it the capacity for natural virtue and natural knowledge.

Being - in itself intelligible, indeed co-extensive with intelligibility (for thomism) - is still intelligible to him, though not (as always) wholly so. Man is still able to know the world, himself, pure

1 Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 95, Art. 1.

2 Ibid, Question 97, Art. 1.

3 Ibid, Question 97, Art. 1.

spirits, and God, by sensible experience and by the first principles of the intelligence; and finally by revelation to know God as He is in Himself. It is necessary to speak further here of this imposing structure of rational and revelational epistemology.

There are two areas of experience in which man has immediate knowledge of essences. He is radically intelligible to himself, knowing his own substantial form directly, (though not in the state of union with the body). And in the beatific vision he will know God directly and immediately. All other knowledge of essences is not immediate.

This other world of essences is apprehended on three levels of abstraction: *physica*, whose object (sensible bodies) cannot exist or be conceived without matter: *mathematica*, whose object (quantity) cannot exist but can be conceived without matter: and *metaphysica*, whose object (being as being) can both exist and be conceived with or without matter.

The concepts of physics are resolved in mobile being, *ens sensible* - the experimental sciences emphasizing therein the sensibile, the philosophy of nature the ens. Knowledge in the experimental sciences is not of things in themselves but according to how they act; it is knowledge by signs and in signs, or *perinoetic*. These are sciences of affirmation - giving knowledge of things as concealed. The philosophy of nature is on the other hand knowledge of things as known, an explicative science. It is knowledge of being and thus in line with metaphysics, yet of being as particularized in the corporeal world of the sensible and mobile. Its intellection is *dianoetic*, that is, of natures in themselves (at least in their most universal features) by signs.

Anthropology is on the border-line between philosophy of nature and metaphysics; for, in so far as man is a corporeal being his study falls within the philosophy of nature, while, in so far as man is spirit capable of immaterial activities, he is a proper object of metaphysics.

The concepts of mathematics are resolved in that form of being which is ideal quantity, or the general ground of sensible properties. Knowledge here is also dianoetic. The mathematical essence is not known from within, nor from without, nor is it created by the human mind; but rather is known by its intelligible constitution itself so far as that is given by means of signs constructed in imaginative intuition. The sensibly real is known here, but not in the order of existence. Entities grasped first in natural/bodies become the basis upon which other entities, real or rational (fictive-symbolic) are constructed. The possibility of co-ordinating natural phenomena in terms of mathematical relations is, says Maritain, the great discovery of modern times, and has given rise to the science of mathematical physics, at once experimental and deductive, materially physical and formally mathematical. This is a mediating science and illustrates the similarity between mathematics and physics - both knowing according to the way things act and not according to what they are, both science (in the narrower sense) and not philosophy or wisdom.

The concepts of metaphysics are resolved in being as being and are concerned with what things are. The essences of corporeal beings connatural to our minds are known dianoetically. The essences of incorporeal beings which are above us cannot be known in themselves but only by analogy, or ananoetic intellection. This epistemological principle is

rooted in the ontological analogic, i.e., in being, at once one and multiple, realized in diverse manners in diverse subjects according to similar proportions.¹ Metaphysical intelligibility is similar to mathematical in that it grasps a world of eternal truths, dissimilar in that its truths are always real whereas mathematical truths may be ideal. Metaphysical intelligibility is like that in the philosophy of nature, in that it is knowledge of the principles of being, yet unlike in that it is knowledge of being valid for all possible existence and not simply a moment of contingent realization, and, further, need not appeal, in order to establish its truths, to the verification of the senses. This also obviously distinguishes metaphysical intelligibility from that on the level of physics.

There are three levels of ananoetic intellection of the trans-intelligible (not unintelligible in itself, or to us, but simply ^{un}con-natural to our minds) - the first two belonging to metaphysics, the third supernatural.

There is knowledge of pure created spirits in which analogy is circumscriptive. It is true that such higher analogues of being became objects for us in lower analogues of the corporeal world; yet the higher analogues are attained through them and do not overpass the analogic concept, since "the transcendental scale of the concept of spirit is sufficient to include that of pure created spirit".²

But in the knowledge of God, ananoetic intellection is uncir-

1 See, for instance, The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 261.

2 Ibid, p. 271.

cumscriptive. For, though our concepts and names accurately characterize God's being as present in creation, they do not grasp it as it is in Himself, nor in any way delimit or enclose the divine reality. Maritain points out that there are two factors to be kept in¹ mind, inseparable for us but distinct in themselves: what is signified, and the mode of our signification. The significance belongs to God even before it applies to creatures. The mode of signification is limited to the created analogue, and deficient with regard to God. Thus, we know with absolute certainty, by the several proofs and particularly from that of contingent being, that God is, and that He is "simple, one, good, omniscient, all-powerful, free...¹ sovereignly personal"; but we do not know what these qualities are in God, nor in what the Godhead itself consists. The higher analogue infinitely surpasses the lower and there is no common measure between them. At the same time, the higher is known with absolute certainty in the lower. So it is that the knowledge of God in metaphysics or natural theology is neither quidditative nor mythical, but is rooted in the analogy or rightful proportionality.

Since our concepts are deficient with regard to God as transcendent, it follows that "negative" theology has a certain advantage over "positive" theology. Yet negative theology presupposes positive theology, as our ignorance is not pure ignorance, but rather ¹ignorance of the known. Thus, we know by the reason that God is "good" without knowing what "goodness" in God is; and it is therefore better to deny that He is "good"

¹ Ibid, p. 282; 289.

than to suggest He is merely "good" and not "Good" - which we cannot do except by indirect and negative means. We will add a further word on this matter in a moment.

It must now be noted that, in considering the natural knowledge of God, we have reached what Maritain calls the first degree of "wisdom". There are two other degrees of wisdom above this: the knowledge of theology, and that of mystical contemplation. But in order to pass on to them, revelation and grace must intervene. For God is transcendent, and although "doubtless by our very nature as reasonable beings we are capable of an approximation to the divine essence as our object of vision... we are only so ordinated by grace".¹ Connaturality is necessary to the knowledge of God in His essence. Such connaturality was given at creation as a supernatural gift, but it was lost in the fall. It can only be restored by grace. Thus the third level of ananoetic intellection concerns the super-analogy of faith.

This analogy of faith is not only uncircumscriptive; it is also revealed. Factors of common human experience are used - still in themselves unproportionate to the deity - but not so when charged with revelational potency. Through them God discloses Himself as He is known to Himself, and He is thereby known to us as He is in Himself, yet at a distance and not seen. Both the knowledge of God on the highest level of metaphysics and the knowledge that comes in faith are ananoetic, but there is this fundamental difference between them: "For metaphysical knowledge of God it is in the heart of the intelligible that our intellect, having

1 Ibid, p. 317.

discovered the ananoetic value of being and the objects which belong to the transcendent order, rises, thanks to these, to the divine analogue. On the contrary in the knowledge of faith it is in the very heart of the divine transintelligible, in the depth of the Godhead itself that the whole process of knowledge starts in order to return thither, that it makes, by the free generosity of God, choice, in the intelligible universe which falls under our senses, of objects and concepts of which God alone knows that they are analogical signs of what is hidden in Him, and of which He makes use to speak of Himself to us in our language".¹

Thus, it is only by a revealed analogy that we know paternity and filiation have a proper transcendental reference, that God became man, died and rose again for man's redemption, established His church with the sacraments and the means of grace, and restored to us the hope of glory. Since God is not seen, He is not known, even here, immediately. Yet the names Father, Son and Holy Ghost are not metaphorical, but describe what the divine persons formally and intrinsically are. There is, however, metaphorical or parabolic analogy. Super-analogous faith makes use both of notions which have ananoetic significance (once charged with revelational potency) and of notions in themselves incapable of being transcendentalized and whose ananoetic value therefore remains concealed in a metaphorical analogy - as in the case (an example used by Maritain)² of the phrase "and sitteth on the right hand of the Father". They cannot be taken literally, yet they are essentially true

1 Ibid, p. 298.

2 Ibid, p. 299.

Because they rest upon a concealed analogy of rightful proportionality. This metaphorical analogy is not, says Maritain, "...myth," which signifies fictionally certain traits of the creature, but which with regard to divine things has in itself only an entirely undetermined metaphorical value, and holds in itself no rightful assignable analogy of proportionality¹. It is parabolic, in itself rightful and assignable to God, but so full of meaning that it surpasses itself.

All this concerns cataphatic theology and the positive content of revealed truth. There is also an apophatic theology which knows God by negation - not only in natural theology where it consists in declaring that God is like nothing created - but also a form of knowledge or wisdom of a higher order which, presupposing the positive content of revealed truth, yet goes beyond it in mystical experience. "Goes beyond?" Not in content, but in its way of apprehension. Nothing is attained in contemplation that is not already known in dogmatic formulations of revealed truth. But whereas these know God in Himself, but at a distance, mystical contemplation, overpassing concepts at a distance, enters by love into union with God. It does not destroy conceptual ideas but simply transcends them - uniting ideas with reality and directly experiencing God, in whom subject and object, existence and intelligibility, subsist in sovereign simplicity and unity. This is the highest reach of the human spirit elevated by grace, in history.

For both the knowledge of faith and of mystical contemplation,

1 Ibid, p. 300. (footnote)

as well as for the beatific vision, the sanctifying grace of supernatural charity and the inhabitation of the triune God is necessary. Such grace creates in us a complete organism of supernatural energies - faith, hope, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the seven gifts of wisdom, and the infused moral virtues. Indeed, it makes us connatural with God and participants of the divine nature. But how can a finite creature "participate" in divinity? It is "formally" or by intention, one of the two forms of existence (the other being entitative). This is the crown of the life of grace, which - though the highest degree of knowledge - is uncommunicable, as God is the immediate actuation of our intelligence without intermediate ideas.

"Purely and perfectly spiritual, free from all egotism, as from every vestige of the 'animal' or 'biological' (I mean by the word 'a life still centered round the interests of the individual and the species), such a love, in which two natures are one spirit, two persons one love, is inseparable from the penetrating savours of a wisdom which in itself is in some manner substantial, and from an experiencing knowledge of the divine persons. Thus it carried the human being to the highest degree of knowledge which is accessible here on earth".¹

(It may be parenthetically noted here, before further exposition or criticism, that Niebuhr's basic disagreement with Maritain, succinctly put, is simply that he would deny there is any love or any knowledge "purely and perfectly spiritual, free from all egotism". And he would doubtless add that the very pretention to such excellence is the most decisive evidence of its untruth.)

1 Ibid, pp. 470-471.

The vital factor - we may now observe - in this comprehensive thomist construction of the edifice of knowledge, rising from the senses by degrees of abstraction until it is crowned (with the aid of revelation and grace) by the knowledge of God as He is in Himself, is that a straight line runs through it, each level demanding and receiving completion from the one immediately above; science asking for philosophy, philosophy for revelation and faith, faith for mystical union. The distinguishing deature of the relation between the four degrees of knowledge is , in other words, continuity.

The thomist confidence and claim in behââf of reason and rational man is subject, as we have seen, to very definite qualifications. They may be summarized here:

- (1) All being is not reason, pure form or pure act.
- (2) Knowledge is itself a kind of being, but it is, except for knowledge of knowledge, of extra~~mental~~ being.
- (3) Truth is conformity of the intelligence to the (extra~~mental~~) thing.
- (4) The mind is confronted by both sub-intelligible and super-intelligible realities. Corporeal natures below us refuse to surrender to us their specific, material determinations. Pure spirits and God are above us and can be known only by analogy.
- (5) Reason must be completed by revelation.
- (6) Salvation is not merely by knowledge and wisdom; power and grace are necessary.
- (7) Knowledge is abstraction. It requires completion in the grace of charity and in the beatific vision, wherein subject and object are united as one spirit.
- (8) God cannot be seen immediately except in the beatific vision, and then not exhaustively.

Thus thomism, if a rationalism, is a qualified one. Yet, it is a rationalism. Whatever the qualifications with regard to reason, the following considerations indicate the extent of the thomist claims in its behalf:

- (1) Reason is the heart of the imago dei.
- (2) It is uncorrupted, though wounded by deprivation, in the fall.
- (3) The natural law is absolutely dependable (a point to be treated in the next section).
- (4) Reason, though requiring revelation, regulates so to speak the entire structure.
- (5) Reason is in no sense contradicted, but simply confirmed and extended, by revelation.
- (6) There is absolute certainty in both the deliverances of reason and in the deposit of revelation (which theology rationally explicates in infallible church dogmas).
- (7) The beatific vision is a seeing of God - to be sure in love - but nevertheless primarily a seeing. Its character as seeing is shown by the fact that it precludes activity of every kind, including the loving service of God's creatures.¹
- (8) Christian truth is something that can be discerned and accepted as propositions that are true, or in modern parlance - non-existentially. They are there, to be observed and perhaps assented to; they may or may not be inwardly appropriated.

It may be said at once that Niebuhr would agree with all the thomist limitations on reason - while interpreting some in his own way, and adding others - and would disagree with every one of the thomist claims in its behalf just enumerated. However, before directly juxtaposing the two views on the quest for truth, we must go back, to take as

1 Ibid, p. 469.

it were a running start, by reviewing and further developing Niebuhr's idea of reason and revelation.

Man, for Niebuhr, is a unity of nature and spirit created in the image of God, a creature who has misused his freedom to deface but not destroy his entire essential nature. He is (as always) able to know in part, the objectively real world of nature, history and God. But his vision, particularly of the latter two, has been blurred by sin. Therefore, both because of finiteness and because of sin, further special help from God is required.

The distinction between natural and historical knowledge (including at its outer limit confrontation with God) is fundamental. For the fall has not seriously affected man's capacity for the first, though it has for the second.

Niebuhr invokes Jesus' words "the face of the sky" and "the signs of the times" to point to the difference between the knowledge of nature and the knowledge of history. Discerning "the face of the sky" is a process of knowing in which the mind is at the centre, while the self with its anxieties is on the circumference. Here, therefore, man may approach that objectivity - that is to say, honestly and accurately - which is the regulative principle and ideal of all knowledge. A mistake may be made, as man is finite and not omniscient. But it is not likely to be made because of "interest" or egoistic corruption. Discerning "the signs of the times" is, on the other hand, a process of knowing in which the total self, with its anxieties, is at the center, while the mind is now on the circumference. Here, again,

mistakes may be made which are due to ignorance of the mind and finite limitation. But they may also be due to a "holding of the truth in unrighteousness".

"There is thus a reliability in our knowledge of the 'face of the sky' which is practically unattainable in our discernment of the 'signs of the times'. 'Signs of the times' include all forms of historical, in contrast to natural, knowledge. To discern the signs of the times means to interpret historical events and values. The interpretation of history includes all judgements we make of the purpose of our own actions and those of others: it includes the assessment of the virtue of our own and other interests, both individual and collective: and finally it includes our interpretation of the meaning of history itself".¹

~~including its Source, Center and End.~~

2

Philosophy is on the "border-line" between natural and historical knowledge. In so far as it faces towards the facts of nature, it may partake of the character of natural knowledge; though the moment facts of nature begin to be interpreted in their implication for man the distinctive objectivity and certainty of natural knowledge is qualified. In so far as it confronts the question of the meaning of human existence, it partakes of the character of historical knowledge and is subject to the peril of egoistic corruption. Men may know that life points to a fuller disclosure and completion of meaning from beyond itself, and thus may expect a Christ. But they also prematurely complete that meaning around themselves or some extension of themselves. Therefore, when the true Christ comes He is rejected, except by those who in faith think beyond themselves by grace and know that Jesus, who vindicates God without including any man in that vindication, is the Christ.

1 Discerning the Signs of the Times, p. 2.

2 Ibid, p. 7.

The knowledge of history and of God being subject not merely to the limitations of the mind but also to corruptions of the heart, it follows that historical error is overcome - insofar as it is overcome - partly by increased knowledge, but also by the vanquishment of the pride of the heart. Niebuhr admits this is not a new insight; but he thinks that "little has¹ been done to estimate the moral as distinguished from the intellectual factors which are involved in our errors of historical judgement". The marxists have made some contribution by their notion of "ideological taint"; but have vitiated their own point by regarding the taint as due to finiteness, and by restricting it to the bourgeois foe. It is a uniquely Christian insight that allows the full appreciation of both the intellectual and the moral factors in historical error.

The paradox of grace - that God's power is in us and yet against us - in terms of the problem of truth, means that we do and yet do not have it. "The truth, as it is contained in the Christian revelation, includes the recognition that it is neither possible for man to know the truth fully nor to avoid the error of pretending that he does... The very apprehension of this paradox is itself an expression of the two-² fold aspect of grace. It is a thought beyond all human thought..." We must pause for a careful look at this "thought beyond all human thought".

Quite clearly, the thought which recognises the limits of human thought is beyond other human thought and peculiarly transcendent. But whether it is also beyond "all" human thought is another question.

1 Ibid, p. 10.

2 Human Destiny, p. 217.

Niebuhr quotes Tillich approvingly as arriving

"at a formal transcendence over the ambiguity of all historical truth by the following logic: 'The doctrine of the character of knowledge as a decision, like everything that makes truth relative, elicits the objection that this doctrine makes itself relative and thus refutes itself... What is true, however, of all human knowledge cannot be true of the knowledge of knowledge, otherwise it would cease to have universal significance. On the other hand, if an exception be admitted, then for one bit of reality the equivocal character of being is broken... is that possible? It would be impossible if the removal of the ambiguity of existence were to occur at any place in existence. Whatever stands in the context of knowledge is subject to the ambiguity of knowledge. Therefore, such a proposition must be removed from the context of knowledge... It must be the expression of the relation of knowledge to the Unconditioned... The judgment that is removed from ambiguity... can be only the fundamental judgment of the relationship of the Unconditioned to the conditioned... The content of this judgment is just this - that our subjective thinking never can reach the unconditioned Truth... This judgement is plainly the absolute judgement which is independent of all its forms of expression, even of the one by which it is expressed here. It is the judgement which constitutes truth as truth.'"¹

Niebuhr calls this "a precise formulation of the ultimate self-trans-
cendence of the human spirit",² in philosophical terms which deal with the problem of finiteness and not of sin. If the aspect of sin be included in the formulation of the problem as Niebuhr has included it, the terms would be different but the point the same, he says. Thus Tillich's formal transcendence over the ambiguity of historical truth could be equated with his own "'perfection' before the fall... which ~~however~~ hovers as a possibility but not as an actuality over all action"³ and which, if realised at all, "belongs to the realm of grace".

Although I am fairly certain I agree with what Niebuhr and Tillich are trying to say, I do not believe they have succeeded in say-

1 From The Interpretation of History, pp. 169-170. Niebuhr quotes this in Human Destiny, pp. 217-218. (footnotes)

2 Ibid. Human Destiny, p. 218.

3 Ibid, p. 218.

ing it. I do, in fact, think that they have violated their own principles. They have made here a necessarily abortive attempt to rationalise the biblical paradox. For, to claim "that for one bit of reality the equivocal character of being is broken" is to forsake dialectical logic; to hold that there is at any point a formal, even if not material, transcendence over the ambiguity of all historical knowledge is to relapse into thomist principles and a thomist dissolution of the dialectic.

The necessity for a dialectical logic is given, as I understand it, in the double fact that there is not only continuity between God and man as *imago dei*, but also - between God as the Creator and man as creature - a quantitative discontinuity, and - between God as Holy and man as sinful - a qualitative discontinuity. Tillich, in treating the problem in terms of finiteness, has ignored the fact of qualitative discontinuity; and, in claiming formal transcendence over historical ambiguity and the possibility of making "the absolute judgement", has denied the fact of quantitative discontinuity. Niebuhr, in his notion of perfection before the fall, ignores the fact that even here there would be quantitative discontinuity.

The situation, therefore, is that though, as Niebuhr says, "the real dialectic of the conditioned and the Unconditioned... is taken seriously... only in the Christian faith", it is not taken with sufficient seriousness either by Tillich or himself - at least, so far as their formulation of the problem under discussion is concerned. The

1 Ibid, p. 218.

"truth" is that there is no point where man does not stand in, and under, God - both by reason of finiteness and of sin. Is this statement itself "true"? Yes, and no. We can say that and nothing more. It is a truth that we hold, not as formally absolute and materially relative - there is in any case no form without content - but a truth we have by faith - certain and yet uncertain. I see no possibility, and no desirability, of refusing to apply to the "final" truth the same dialectic "having and not having" which Niebuhr himself has put forward with such power. Nor can I believe he ever really intended otherwise. If he did, he erred and violated his own principle. If he did not, then let him reconsider the formulation which, in that case, misstates his real position.

The principle - that we have and yet do not have the truth - is the only possible ground, Niebuhr thinks, for the practice of toleration. There is a double test of tolerance: the holding of convictions and the spirit of mercy toward those who disagree. To hold convictions is to believe one has the truth. To have the spirit of mercy toward those who disagree is to recognize one does not have it in any simple sense and to realize the majesty of truth. A simple having of the truth leads to fanaticism. A simple not-having leads to scepticism and nihilism. Speaking historically, Catholicism is intolerant in principle; the Reformation is often intolerant in fact, contrary to its principle; and the Renaissance has been tempted to scepticism and often illustrates the claim of Gilbert Chesterton that tolerance is the virtue of people who do not believe anything. None has altogether realized the two-fold necess-

ity of responsibility toward the truth and generosity toward those who differ from us about what it is.

There have been offences on all sides. But since Catholicism is intolerant in principle and we are here distinguishing Niebuhr's attitude from it, a further illustrative word about the results must be added.

Niebuhr refers to Erich Przywara's discussion of how the Dominican order became the chief instrument of the medieval inquisition, despite the fact that the great Dominicans were personally humble men, and quotes his defense: "The Dominican type regards itself as entrusted by an inscrutable providence with the sacred guardianship of the one Truth in the midst of the world... Truth remote from all fluctuations due to individuality and existence".¹ Then Niebuhr observes:

"The difficulty with this essentially high-minded justification of the inquisition is that it does not understand that the one everlasting truth of the gospel contains the insight that mere men cannot have this truth 'remote from all fluctuations due to individuality and existence'. This error is the root of all inquisitions".²

We are now in a position to summarize Niebuhr's views on reason, revelation and the quest for truth, and at the same time to relate them directly to Maritain's.

(1) Both men have what - described philosophically - would be called a realist metaphysic and a critically realist epistemology. There is an objectively real world of nature, history, and God, which we can know in part.

1 Przywara, Polarity, p. 106, quoted by Niebuhr, Human Destiny. pp. 221-222

2 Human Destiny, pp. 221-222.

- (2) They agree and differ as to the implications, for the problem of truth, of human finiteness and sin.

They would agree that error in natural knowledge is due almost wholly to finiteness. And further, both would say that in historical knowledge and in the knowledge of God there is an incompleteness which requires revelation. But Maritain regards error in historical knowledge as due to the difference between essence and existence, and the opaqueness of materiality; and error in divine knowledge as due to the super-intelligibility of the Deity. The logical implicate of this is that revelation need only complete what is lacking in reason. Niebuhr, on the other hand, thinks that error about proximate historical issues and about the Center, Source and End of history is not so much rooted in finite limitation as in our holding the truth in unrighteousness. There is thus for him not only an incompleteness that must be completed but also a sin that must be purged.

Niebuhr's God is more transcendent than Maritain's, and finiteness is a more serious obstacle to the knowledge of Him. This accounts for whatever difference there is in their notions about "the mode of signification" of the divine. They agree that all human language is proportionate to creatures, not Creator. Maritain insists, however, that there are concepts whose ananotic significance is intrinsically and formally accurate as descriptions of God, and that there are other concepts whose ananotic value, though metaphorical or parabolic, are yet rooted in a determinable analogy of rightful proportionality, and, being determinable, thus distinguished from myth which has "no rightful assignable

analogy of proportionality".¹ Niebuhr agrees that religious notions may be essentially true. But he denies that they can be literally true or possess a "determinable analogy of rightful proportionality". A case in point is the interpretation¹ of the nature of Christ. Orthodoxy (perhaps for historically necessary reasons, in opposing heresy) has attempted to define the divinity and the humanity of Christ, and to assert what is obviously impossible logically - namely, that the Unconditioned can become conditioned without ceasing to be Unconditioned. Thus the significance of Christ is supposedly grasped in rational categories, whereas His significance is precisely that He transcends all categories and should therefore rather be regarded as a symbol of the divine ground of being and meaning.

But if God is quantitatively more discontinuous with man as creature, ^{than} for Niebuhr ~~as~~ for Maritain, He is also, according to Niebuhr, qualitatively discontinuous. Man is not only ignorant and his concepts radically deficient to God; he is wilfully (if not wholly consciously) blind to the truth. He both egoistically conceives and completes meaning from the standpoint of the self as center. He invariably inclines to equate his truth with the Truth. Reason is therefore both incomplete, and submerged in idolatry so that revelation must and does contradict it.

Thus, whereas for Maritain there are truths about God which man holds with absolute certainty by his unaided reason, and further truths which he holds by faith from revelation, also with absolute certainty, there are, for Niebuhr - who regards absoluteness as a category of divinity, not humanity - no infallible proofs of reason and no infallible dogmas of

¹ The Degrees of Knowledge, p. 300.

revelation. There is only God's truth spoken to man in his misery and aspiration, partly relativized and partly corrupted, ~~un~~apprehended inwardly, and held, not with simple certainty, but with certainty and uncertainty, in fear and trembling. There is certainty - sufficient to stake one's existence, and to preclude scepticism and nihilism. But there is also uncertainty - sufficient to admit the possibility of error, and to preclude intolerance.

(3) Niebuhr believes, then, that there is both mystery and meaning. And his major charge against thomism is that it resolves mystery into meaning too simply - in other words, that it pretends to know too much. He declares that there are three kinds of people: those who are not perplexed (the rationalists); those who are perplexed unto despair (the sceptics); and those who are perplexed, but not unto despair (the Christians). There are not, he thinks, many sceptics in any age. Many people perhaps most, claim to know too much. Naturalists claim to know so much about the natural world that it ceases to point to any mystery beyond itself. Thomists claim to know too much both about existence, and the mysterious ground of existence. Niebuhr writes: "Any careful reading of the works of Thomas Aquinas must impress the thoughtful student with the element of pretention which informs the flowering of the Catholic faith in the 'golden' thirteenth century. There seems to be no mystery which is not carefully dissected, and no dark depth of evil which is not fully explained, and no height of existence which is not scaled. The various attributes of God are all carefully defined and related to each other. The mysteries of the human soul and spirit are mastered and rationally

defined in the most meticulous terms. The exact line which marks justice from injustice is known. Faith and reason are so intermingled¹ that the characteristic certainty of each is compounded with the other". The natural law, upon which the earthly life of man is based, is infallibly known; and likewise, by revelation, the realities of grace and the conditions of glory. But such claims are pretentious, obscuring the weakness of man. "The Christian faith (being more dialectical) is the right expression of the greatness and the weakness of man in relation to the mystery and the meaning of life".²

(4) Whereas, for Maritain, the final fulfillment of life is the contemplative vision of God in which man by grace becomes a (formal) participant of the divine nature, the fulfillment of life, on Niebuhr's view, is an active relation of love between man and God and between man and man. The thomist view, Niebuhr thinks, represents a triumph of Greek rationalism over the Hebraic element in Christianity. It is, or ought to be, refuted and precluded by Christ who was an event in history, an act, and not merely a thought. The whole stuff of history was present in Christ; and belief in His resurrection symbolizes not that an immortal part of man is extracted from a mortal part for some sort of union with God - but rather that the essential nature of history - a unity of body and spirit, and a relation of life to life - is fulfilled at the "end". Thus, there will be not merely a seeing of God, but a living with God and with man.

1 Discerning the Signs of the Times, p. 158

2 Ibid, p. 172.

b. The problem of the good.

In the quest for the good, as in the quest for truth, Maritain believes that a higher degree of realization is possible than Niebuhr will admit - with respect both to "natural" man and "redeemed" man.

In developing their respective notions about the possibilities and limits of nature and grace, it will be well to bear in mind what exactly they mean by these two terms. While Niebuhr does not distinguish so rigidly between the two areas as Maritain, it is nevertheless true to say that both men mean by nature that aspect of man's experience not directly affected by confrontation with Christ, while they understand the realm of grace to be that area of experience directly confronted by Christ and lifted up by His power for good.

There is a sense in which the quest for the good is more completely historical than the quest for truth. Niebuhr declares that "it engages all human vitalities and powers more obviously than the intellectual quest".¹ Maritain would express the idea by saying that truth, particularly philosophical truth, bears only upon essence, not existence, and that intelligibility is co-extensive with immateriality. Since rational knowledge is of universals and history is individual and contingent, there cannot, strictly speaking, be knowledge of history; or rather, there can be knowledge of history only in so far as the succession of events receives form from ideas and shares in their

1 Human Destiny, p. 244.

intelligibility. History as such, therefore, can be fathomed only by revelation and faith which "descends to the weakness and entanglements of specific, historic and contingent events... Faith can achieve this, because at the same time it ascends into the absolute stability and simplicity, into the most concrete and existential individuality of the divine Self, and because it knows historical events not as a process of historical knowledge, but by means of the supra-historical, eternal, prime Truth in Person, declaring itself to us and enlightening human hearts".¹ Thus historical existence is opaque to reason, which is ordered on the universal and eternally necessary. The point that the quest for the good is more completely historical than the quest for the truth is likewise suggested by the thomist distinction between the speculative and the practical judgment. The former proceeds solely from the intellect and bears upon truth as truth. The practical judgment is directed toward action from the beginning and proceeds conjointly from the intellect and the will. Its validity, therefore, depends not merely upon the correctness of reasoning but upon the right orientation of the whole personality.

If, therefore, the quest of the good is more completely historical, we may expect that the principles of historical interpretation held by each man will be still more decisively tested as we analyse them in terms of this problem.

It will be convenient to confront the respective views by

1 ^{edee} ~~Recovering~~ the Time, p. 172.

concentrating, within the realm of nature, upon the problem of natural law, and, within the realm of grace, upon the problem of what remains of sin in the redeemed. We shall speak here in individual terms, and then, in the next section, in collective terms.

It is to be expected that Maritain, who believes, unlike Niebuhr, that man's essence was not corrupted in the fall, should have a more unambiguous confidence in man's capacity to discern and to keep the so-called natural law. By natural law, Maritain means that part of the divine law open to the unaided reason, that ensemble of "the rights and duties which follow from the first principle: 'do good and avoid evil', in a necessary manner, and from the simple fact that man is man, nothing else being taken into account".¹ The content of natural law is general and abstract moral principles. But since it is a part of the natural law itself that general principles must be determined or specified, certain further principles are derived which are known as the law of nations and as positive law. The law of nations follows, like the natural law itself, from the first principle in a necessary manner, but in this case supposing certain universal conditions of fact in history. The positive law likewise follows from the first principle, but in a fashion contingent upon the situation within given communities. Obviously, on such a view, the validity of any law depends upon its rootage in the divine law - a notion which is the complete negation of dominant modern positivist conceptions.

¹ The Rights of Man, p. 39.

The natural rights which follow in a necessary fashion from the fact that man is man include, according to Maritain, rights of the human person as such, rights of the civic person, rights of the social person.

Duties are correlative with rights, necessitating man's exercise of rights in a way attuned to the necessary ends of his being. In natural terms, this means moral achievement clustered about the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. All these virtues, while by no means always realized by men, are well within human capacities unaided by special grace.

Niebuhr's quarrel with natural law theories is not that there is no such thing as natural law and principles of justice or that these cannot be kept at all, but rather that such theories claim too much. Thus, an uncorrupted reason is supposed to discern self-evident truths. But "the fact that the content of the natural law as Catholicism conceives it differs so widely from the content of the natural law as the eighteenth century conceived it, though the contents of both are supposed to be 'self-evident' truths of reason, must make the critical student critical".¹ No historical definition of even the most abstract principle can claim immunity from the limiting factors of finiteness and of sin. When Maritain admits the contingencies of positive law, Niebuhr agrees but insists that it is even more relative than is suggested by a theory which claims positive law as derived in a simple fashion from natural law. When Maritain ascribes finality to natural law precepts themselves, Niebuhr² flatly demurs. He describes a "descending scale of relativity".³

¹ The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. 69. (footnote)

² See Human Destiny, p. 253.

³ The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. 74.

Moral principles, though not absolute as held by man, are more transcendent and valid than political ones; general political principles are more valid than specific applications of these principles; and specific applications may have greater validity than the interests of the forces in society which apply them. Yet such forces invariably claim the sanctity of the general principle to justify their own power.

"There was a greater degree of validity in the ethical content of medieval natural law than in the social and political hegemony of priests and landed aristocrats in the feudal society. And there is more truth in the natural law as Jefferson conceived it, than there is justice in the social hegemony of monopolistic capitalism in our era, which maintains its prestige by appeals to Jefferson's principles."¹

It must be emphasised, however, that though Niebuhr insists on the relativity of all historical principles against thomists who tend to deny it, he also maintains against secular and Reformation relativists that there are transcendent, regulative norms^{rm} of conduct open to the so-called unaided reason. "The complex character of all historic conceptions of justice thus refutes both relativists who see no possibility of finding valid principles of justice, and the rationalists and optimists who imagine it possible to arrive at completely valid principles, free of every taint of special interest and historical passion."²

Thomist natural law theories rest upon a rigid and mechanical distinction between natural and redeemed man, which Niebuhr challenges in itself. To suggest there is a virtue of the natural order and another virtue of the supernatural order is, he thinks, to obscure the

1 Ibid, p. 75.

2 Human Destiny, p. 256.

fact that man is a unity of body and spirit the law of whose life at every point is love, and thus to incline to an easy conscience those who think natural man need seek merely justice. Love is not, to be sure, a simple possibility of earthly existence, but it is not for this reason irrelevant. Nor is it simply a higher principle man may live by in personal relations within the community of grace or beyond history in the Kingdom of God. It is the law of life, the completion and the negation of every lesser reality, the great truth incarnate in Christ which judges us and reduces us to contrition even as it beckons us onward and upward. There is therefore no natural man who is entitled, on the basis of prudential calculation of his own interests against others, to say, with a completely easy conscience, "this much and no more for you". There is no natural man, analysing his relation to war in terms which make it simply just or unjust, who may say, "I can participate in this just war with a completely clear conscience". The situation is always, for Niebuhr, much more complex than that. "The simple fact that man is man" is not really so simple.

"One of the facts about man is that his vitalities may be 'elaborated in indeterminate variety. That is the fruit of his 'freedom. Not all these elaborations are equally wholesome and 'creative. But it is very difficult to derive 'in a necessary 'fashion' the final rules of his individual and social existence. 'It is this indeterminateness and variety which makes analogies 'between the 'laws of nature' in the exact sense of the words and 'the laws of human nature so great a source of confusion. It is 'man's nature to transcend nature and elaborate his own historical 'existence in indeterminate degree".¹

This finally postulates the necessity of perfect love as alone capable

1 The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, p. 78. (footnote)

of fulfilling human possibilities. Thus is precluded sealing off a natural dimension of experience to be judged according to its own principles of justice.

There is, then, for Niebuhr as well as for Maritain, an area of experience not directly confronted by Christ which yet has possibilities; but the possibilities of this "natural" area are, for Niebuhr, neither so high in knowledge or virtue, nor so separate from the realm of grace, as for Maritain.

Neither thinker, however, believes that the highest possibilities of history lie within the realm of nature, but in the realm of grace. It will therefore be necessary to consider this crucial area with the utmost care.

In the fall, according to Maritain, man turned from God his final end, and lost his ordination toward and capacity for the eternal (though not for the natural). This was mortal sin - the ultimate, constituting form of sin. Henceforth of himself he was lost. Only a further activity of God could restore man to his former capacity. This further activity takes place in Christ and in His church, offering to man the sanctifying grace of charity - the ultimate, constituting form of justification - which regenerates from within and restores man to con-naturalness with God. Faith or the acceptance of God's grace in Christ is a prerequisite of salvation, but it is not in itself salvation. Rather, it must be completed by charity, from which flow good works. It is possible for man - having received redemption from mortal sin - to fall again and lose sanctifying grace. But it is also possible for man - having received forgiveness and sanctifying grace - to walk henceforth

without mortal sin, if not without venial sin or incidental impunities. Thus, according to thomism, the redeemed man may be "formally" sinless yet "materially" sinful, but not, as with Luther - who did not admit a distinction between mortal and venial sin - at once really sinful and really justified. Maritain calls this Reformation principle "a fantasy¹ of incurably nominalist theology which places opposites side by side".

Since Niebuhr stands, broadly speaking, with Luther and the Reformation on this central issue, the debate between him and Maritain has reached its climax. Niebuhr asserts the necessity of grace for salvation - nor merely "faith", which is subject to misconception as a² work - but grace, both as power and as pardon to the end of history: pardon as well as power, for not only is there no natural merit worthy of complete divine approval, but there is no grace as power which man cannot and does not make the basis of new pretension and sin. This is "redeemed" man at once sinful and righteous, sinful and justified.

The distinction between "sinful and righteous", and "sinful and justified" - which is my own - points to the necessity of discussing this issue both from the standpoint of man's condition and of God's attitude toward that condition - a distinction (not always seen even by our two thinkers) the recognition of which may aid in clarification.

Regarding man's condition in grace: Maritain would like to refute the doctrine that "redeemed" man is at once sinful and righteous (1) by making it mean at once "formally" sinful and "formally" righteous

1 Three Reformers, p. 177.

2 See, for instance, Human Destiny, pp. 186-187 (footnotes).

(2) and by claiming that this is self-contradictory. But Luther and Niebuhr do not admit the formal and material categories (though, as we shall see in a moment, Niebuhr does distinguish between "in principle" and "in fact"); and consequently they do not say, as Maritain believes, that man is sinful in so far as he is righteous and righteous in so far as he is sinful. That would indeed be self-contradictory, and would reduce paradox to absurdity. But dialectic or paradox is not contradiction; it is rather seeming contradiction made necessary by the complexity and depth of experience which defies precise description, a point which Maritain does not understand at all. As Niebuhr puts it: "It is not easy to express both these aspects of the life of grace, to which all history attests without seeming to offend the canons of logic. That is the reason why moralists have always found it rather easy to discount the doctrine of 'justification by faith'. But here, as in many cases, a seeming defiance of logic is merely the consequence of an effort to express complex facts of experience. It happens to be true to the facts of experience that in one sense the converted man is righteous and that in another sense he is not".¹

While Niebuhr does not agree that the redeemed man may be formally sinless and materially sinful, he does hold that thought or intention may be more pure than action. This is the distinction he has in mind when he speaks of "in principle" and "in fact". He writes:

¹ Human Destiny, pp. 124-125.

"The important point,... is whether the destruction of sin 'in principle' means that the power of inordinate self-love is broken in fact. It is the thesis of St. Augustine and all the catholic ages that this is the case^o and that residual sin represents the eruption of vagrant desires and impulses which have not yet been brought completely under the control of the central will. The thesis is plausible enough: for if destruction of 'self-love' 'in principle' does not mean 'in fact' in some basic sense, what does it mean? Certainly there must be some facts which reveal the new principle by which the soul lives. Surely there must be ~~points~~ ^{facts} meet for repentance'.

"But here the complexities of the moral life are obscured by too simple statement of them. The actual situation is that man may be redeemed from self-love in the sense that he acknowledges the evil of it and recognizes the love of God as the only adequate motive of conduct; and may yet be selfish in more than an incidental sense".

The issue, then, is nothing less than this: whether, even by a merit of grace, the contradiction between the divine and human will can be healed in history. Maritain's answer is "Yes". Niebuhr's answer is - "Yes and No".

Regarding, not man's condition, but God's attitude toward man's condition: Maritain would insist that God does not and cannot call righteous what is unrighteous and that charity must be the ultimate constituting form of justification. Niebuhr would maintain that God "imputes righteousness" to us and that we possess it only by faith. We must analyse the meaning of these views.

If, as Niebuhr maintains, man has not the requisite charity in history to merit salvation, then it is clear that, so far as God accepts us, it must be on some other basis than our charity. But what does "imputed righteousness" mean? If, by it, Niebuhr means, as I think he

1 Ibid, ¹³⁶⁻pp. 137.

means, simply that God continues to treat with us despite our sin - thus displaying toward us not merely judgment but mercy - then I agree. But if he means, as it is my impression Luther tended to mean, calling what is sinful righteous, then I most emphatically disagree. For it seems to me that charity must be, as Maritain insists, the ultimate constituting form of justification, if God is holy.

The truth in the respective positions, then, seems to me to be this: (1) So far as history is concerned, Niebuhr is right that man requires, if he is to be accepted at all, an acceptance despite sin and the lack of charity.

(2) But if God is holy, He cannot be satisfied with a man who remains sinful. We must, therefore, believe that God will continue to work with us, through eternity, until we fulfil His purpose in us. Thus Maritain is right to insist that charity must be the ultimate, constituting form of justification.

Our concern is with history. With respect to it, we must hold with Niebuhr that there is no discipline of nature or merit of grace by which man can confront the divine Judge with an easy conscience, Man, even redeemed man, is and remains to the end of history, at once sinful and righteous, sinful and justified (accepted).

c. The problem of the kingdom.

If the quest for the good is (because it engages most fully the powers of man) the most completely historical category, it may be regarded, particularly as pursued among human collectives, as roughly synonymous with the historical quest for the "Kingdom".

Within historical collectives, Maritain distinguishes more rigidly than Niebuhr between the temporal and the spiritual orders, as well as claims more for the achievement in each sphere. Nevertheless, each recognizes in his own way both "world" and "church". The purpose of this part will be to develop further their respective notions about the world and the church in relation to the Kingdom, and to consider especially the points of divergence between them. Broadly and tentatively, the essential difference between them may be said to be, in the temporal order, that for Maritain there are absolute principles infallibly known and analogically applied, while for Niebuhr there are absolute principles dialectically known and dialectically applied; and, in the spiritual order, that for Maritain the church is that place in human society where sin is overcome both in principle and in fact, while for Niebuhr, it is that place where sin is known to persist in fact on every level, and thus is overcome in principle.

The temporal order is rooted in man's so-called natural endowment, for thomism, and corresponds to "the things that are Caesar's". It draws its unity from the natural catholicity of reason and the principles of the natural law. The spiritual order is rooted in the so-called supernatural addition, lost in the fall, but restored by grace, and corresponds to "the things that are God's". It draws its unity from the supernatural catholicity of grace. The common good of civilization is the right earthly life of man discoverable by reason and proportionate to man's natural endowment. The common good of the church is eternal life and union with the triune God. "These are two specific

ends, clearly distinct; they differ as¹ heaven differs from earth." The spiritual order is obviously the more ultimate one, and thus the temporal is subordinate to it. Yet the subordination is only indirect, as the temporal has its own proper and so-far autonomous end. There is "progress" in both orders. The progress within the temporal order is a double one: so far as there is sin, there is movement toward the kingdom of perdition: so far as there is conformity to the divine will, there is movement toward the Kingdom of God. The progress within the spiritual order is, on the other hand, a simple movement toward the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the spiritual order or church is already the Kingdom of God, but in earthly pilgrimage. Thus "the Christian must needs strive as far as possible to realize in this world (perfectly and absolutely in the case of himself as an individual: in a relative mode and according to the concrete ideal which belongs to each² different age with regard to the world itself) the truths of the Gospel".

There are, then, the two orders of the temporal and the spiritual, rooted in the two dimensions of man's being. The essential nature of these orders, and the principles of their interrelationship, are unchanging. But, says Maritain, actual expression or realization of the interrelationship of the two orders and of the exigencies of a temporal Christian order is³ "analogical, not univocal". This is to say merely that, though the principles are always the same, their realization varies under varying conditions.

1 Scholasticism and Politics, p. 179.

2 True Humanism, p. 103.

3 Ibid, p. 202.

Thus, whereas in medieval Christendom the temporal refraction of the Gospel took one form, it must in modern times take another. By invoking the central thomist principle of analogy here, he means to refute at once "a univocal inertia which clings precisely to what is dead and gone..." and "a whole ideology of revolutionary destruction, which rises in opposition¹ to the very idea of Christendom".

It will be interesting to describe Maritain's conception of the regulative ideal and form of a new Christendom, particularly as that differs from the regulative ideal and form of medieval Christendom.

"For myself I hold that the historical ideal of a new Christendom, of a new Christian temporal order, while founded on the same principles (analogically applied) as that of the Middle Ages, will imply a secular Christian, not a consecrational, conception of the temporal order... the idea at its heart... will not be that of God's holy empire over all things, but rather that of the holy freedom of the creature whom grace unites to God."²

We may draw out the meaning of these words at five points.

(1) Concerning the unity of the temporal order. In medieval Christendom the unity of the temporal order was sought on the highest level of the person; in fact, in the spiritual order itself. This implied doctrinal agreement and political cohesion, and reduced diversity to a minimum. In the new Christendom, on the other hand, the unity of the temporal order will reside in that order itself, thus obviating the necessity of doctrinal agreement and permitting tolerance - not to be sure, he says, dogmatic tolerance which thinks liberty or error a good thing in itself, but civic tolerance which recognizes the dignity of man and the evil of persecution.

1 Ibid, p. 202.

2 Ibid, p. 156.

(2) Concerning the role of the temporal. Whereas medieval Christendom tended to regard the temporal as having a purely instrumental value, the new Christendom must recognize it as possessing its own proper, intermediary and infravalent end. This implies an autonomy of the temporal, and a cultural differentiation and pluralism, far greater than in medieval times.

(3) Concerning the use of political power. Expressive of the ministerial and instrumental character of the whole temporal order in medievalism was the use of political coercion for the spiritual good, individual and social. The new Christendom will insist upon the freedom of the individual from coercion, while the temporal order will serve the spiritual by pursuing its own proper end and developing the conditions for a rightly human life upon earth.

(4) Concerning the basis of hierarchical function and authority. In medievalism the basis was one of essential disparity between the leaders and the led - all human to be sure - but with the led in a position of natural inferiority. The new Christendom will be characterized by an essential parity of men bound to a common work, who choose their own leaders, and by a conception which sees authority as derived from God and going, as it were, through the people to reside in their leaders.

(5) Concerning the common aim. The old Christendom sought a temporal order explicitly devoted to Christ by the labor of baptized men and baptized polity. The new must seek an order implicitly devoted to Christ by its emphasis, in personal relations and in social structures, upon the dignity of man. Such a temporal order can at one and the same

time recognize the lordship of Christ and include in its membership those who can do no more than¹ affirm the dignity of man. Within such a society the church, that is the Roman Catholic Church, would insist upon its primacy as the true church. But other religious families would be free; and influence in the purely temporal would be indirect, through lay men and lay-orders, rather than direct, clerical and ecclesiastical.

The new Christendom of which Maritain speaks does not, needless to say, exist even inchoately to-day, and may not be realized to-morrow or even the next day. That does not matter, so far as the principles which ought to govern it are concerned. What he has sketched is the outline of that temporal system whose animating form will be Christian and will correspond to the climate of the historical epoch which will ensue when the self-liquidation of modern errors shall have taken place.

The realization² of this temporal order will be, as every such order, a relative achievement, a refraction of the Gospel. Its good will be the earthly good of man under a special "historic heaven", even though that good itself will be elevated in its own order by the grace which superabounds in and through the souls of the faithful. Its evil, moreover, will be grave, and will stand beneath the divine judgment.

It is not, therefore, in the temporal but in the spiritual order that the highest possibilities of history are contained. "We must, then, realize that the Church alone can keep in its purity the Gospel leaven...² Everyone else corrupts it". The church is that place in history where

1 See, for instance, The Rights of Man, p. 17.

2 Three Reformers, p. 148.

the contradiction between the divine and human will has by grace been healed. It is not the Kingdom of God as it will be beyond history, for, though in essence supratemporal, it remains in a sense subject to finiteness and in process. But the church is already the Kingdom of God in the sense that it stands on the other side of sin, mediating judgment and¹ grace to a sinful world. It reigns with Christ.

"Nature", considered from the standpoint of human collectives, is, for Niebuhr, the realm of "justice". It is related to love, the ultimate principle, dialectically; that is, in terms of realization and contradiction. This is true both of the relation of the principles of justice to love, and of the structures of justice to love; though the principles of justice are more rational and transcendent than the structures of justice, which more or less express the principles of justice within historical vitalities.

Principles of justice are approximations of the law of love in so far as they extend the sense of obligation toward other men (1) from immediately felt obligation to fixed principles of mutual support in law or custom (2) from intimate personal dealings to wider relations, either as discerned by the individual self or by the community. Principles of justice contradict the law of love in so far as they presuppose and organize strategies of egoistic concern; for whereas love is^a perfect harmony of life with life under the sovereignty of God, justice is merely

1 Roman Catholics are not the only ones who hold a pretentious doctrine of the Church. Even Arnold Toynbee, in his great Study of History, seems inclined to underestimate ecclesiastical pride as an occasion for divine judgment upon history.

a tolerable harmony. Thus, though Niebuhr recognizes transcendent principles of justice, he does not claim so much for them as Maritain. He summarizes his view in this way:

"the positive relation of principles of justice to the ideal of brotherhood makes an indeterminate approximation of love in the realm of justice possible. The negative relation means that all historical conceptions of justice will embody some elements which contradict the law of love. The interests of a class, the viewpoint of a nation, the prejudices of an age and the illusions of a culture are consciously and unconsciously insinuated into the norms by which men regulate their common life. They are intended to give one group an advantage over another. Or if that is not their intention, it is at least their unvarying consequence".¹

The structures of justice, though approximations of the law of love, are also, and even more, contradictory to it than the principles of justice. For, while the principles are abstractly conceived, the structures are historically concrete. Any human community is something more and something less than a construct of reason and conscience. Its "harmony" is a result of the interaction between ethical and legal principles and the coagulation of forces and vitalities. This is to say that communities are governed by power, moral and physical. This power expresses itself as the means of organizing the community, and the balance of competing forces within the community. The peril and misuse of the first is tyranny. The peril and misuse of the second is anarchy. Structures of justice can embody the principles of justice in indeterminate degree. Yet no system of justice can, sin presupposed, completely eliminate the contradiction to brotherhood implicit in every actual manipulation of power.

1 Human Destiny, p. 256.

The balance of power makes for justice in that it tends to prevent tyranny. But it is in¹ itself an expression of conflict, covert and always potentially overt. It is a dispersion of forces which posits the necessity of a centre of power to organize the community. Thus, the centre of power or government "stands upon a higher plane of moral sanction and social necessity than... the balance of power"¹. Yet government itself is morally ambiguous in that, unchecked, it tends toward tyranny. This double character of government justifies the priestly sanctification and prophetic criticism of it in Scripture. It also necessitates democratic government, which organizes the community, yet contains within its structure the right of control over and resistance to itself. The ambiguity of government is of course rooted in the double character of man. Considered from this standpoint: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy² necessary".

Niebuhr' declares that thomism's rationalistic and moralistic errors incline it to underestimate the perils of anarchy and particularly of tyranny in society (a stricture even more true, he says, of both typical ancient and modern thought). "It (thomism) does not comprehend that the justice and peace which the power of the state achieves is always subject to some degree of corruption by reason of the inordinate character³ of this power, and the particular interests of the ruler".

It is evident, then, that Niebuhr's view of "nature" differs

1 Ibid, p. 266.

2 The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness Forward XI.

3 Human Destiny, p. 275.

from Maritain's in that for him (1) nature and the realm of justice is not so distinct from grace (2) nature is related dialectically to grace (3) the principles of justice are not so transcendent (4) the structures of justice are less pure.

The disagreement between Niebuhr and Maritain is, if possible, still more fundamental with regard to the spiritual order or the church. For, whereas both recognize, however differently, the element of sinful contradiction in the temporal order, Maritain does not conceive the church as in any sense under judgment. Niebuhr states the difference between the two views very precisely ... "the church was the historic locus where the contradiction between the historical and the divine was overcome in fact; rather than that locus where the judgment and mercy of God upon the historical are mediated, and where, therefore, the contradiction of the historical and the holy is overcome in principle".¹ The thomist and Roman view sees the world in sin, but the church as standing with God over the world mediating His judgment and mercy, and not with the world under God. Such a conception of the church is, Niebuhr thinks, the quintessential sin which the prophets denounced in Israel.

This conception is the basis of the claim the Roman church makes for primacy, even in a pluralist society such as Maritain sketches. Such a claim is held by Maritain to be "but a simple consequence of what man owes to truth".² But the identification of any human truth with the Truth ^{is} ~~is~~ at once a blasphemous pretension, and a position essentially

1 Ibid, p. 139.

2 ~~Reasoning the Time~~, p. 177.
The Rights of Man, p. 17.

incompatible with a free society. That it is incompatible in principle is logically demonstrable; that it is incompatible in fact is demonstrable by means of reference to the history of Roman intolerance. And no pleasantries about the "pluralist" historical ideal of the new Christendom must be allowed to obscure the fact.

The Roman combination of pretension to sanctity with immersion in ambiguity is nicely revealed by Maritain's attitude toward historical compromise. Noting that certain critics have deplored what they take to be the church's cynical "deals" with given states, he declares: "The Church must above all fulfill its own special task, and endure. It is beside the point if the Church takes on the appearance of cynicism..."¹ Now, Niebuhr would not level irrelevant, moralistic criticism at this attitude. He would simply insist that if Christ had pursued the same logic of the primacy of survival, there would have been no Cross; and that a church which puts the primacy upon historical survival is hardly entitled to claim the sanctity of Christ and His Cross. Indeed, the glaring incongruity between that Cross and a church whose historical "success" has been phenomenal, ought - one would suppose - to be apparent even to the saints.

The failure of the Roman church to conceive itself as standing under judgment and in need of mercy is for Niebuhr simply the final evidence of how "man's self-esteem resists that part of the Gospel which is set against all human achievements".² It may, therefore, be regarded as a disheartening revelation about man - even Christian man. But it is

¹ Redeeming the Time, p. 177.
² Human Destiny, p. 147.

also the validation of what Christianity says about man as a creature whose sin is to refuse to admit the incompleteness and the contradiction of his life on every level of existence, both individual and collective, temporal and spiritual.

C. Summary and Conclusion.

1. Continuity, and continuity-discontinuity.

We are now in a position to summarize the two views of History, and conclude. The crucial question between ostensibly religious and ostensibly irreligious interpretations of history is whether, ~~asa~~ as a matter of fact, there is some sort of super-history to which history is related. The crucial question between religious interpretations like thomism and dialectic, which assume there to be such, is as to the exact nature of the relationship. The thomist answer to this question, as we have seen, is that the relationship is one of continuity, at least between the faithful of the church and the Kingdom of God. The dialectical answer is, on the other hand, that the relationship is, at every point, one of continuity-discontinuity.

2. The "validation" of dialectic.

The problem of the "validation" of Christian truth is, as I understand it, a double one; for it must ask both what is Christian and what is true.

a. What is Christian is, of course, determined by the objective nature of Christianity - which is quite independent of individual and corporate opinions about it. The objective nature of Christianity is the experience of a given community, moving toward and away from the central

event in Christ.¹ None of us grasps what that objective nature is, in any simple sense, and there is no way of doing so. The corporate judgment of the church, in so far as there is one, must certainly be regarded as having authority. But that authority cannot be thought infallible, nor beyond the ambiguity of finite judgments subject to sinful corruption. Neither can the corporate judgment of the church relieve the individual Christian of the responsibility of judging. Moreover, the judgment of the individual is itself inescapably existential. This is to say that one's conclusion about what is Christian is not and cannot be arrived at by a purely inductive process of thought, since every judgment presupposes some criterion of judgment which must finally be rooted in a primordial decision.

For me, then, that is Christian which belongs to the community of experience centering in Christ, - more particularly, as that is interpreted by St. Paul, in whose thought ~~and~~ the whole biblical view of God and the world culminates in the paradox of judgment and mercy.

Christianity, thus understood, pronounces to man both a "Yes" and a "No". But its distinctive word is "No", since man says "Yes" to himself.

Now, if this be a true view of Christianity, thomism cannot be an adequate expression of it. For it denies discontinuity and speaks a simple "Yes", at least to the redeemed man and the redeemed community. It may indeed be "the perennial philosophy", and possess, as I believe, it does possess - more coherence and relevance than any of its systematic alternatives. But it is also, as a pretentious rationalism, the most

¹ For a similar view, see William Temple's Christianity as an Interpretation of History, p. 9.

perennial, plausible, pious, and perverse sanctification of historical ambiguity to be found in a field rich with possibilities. Dialectic, on the other hand, speaking both "Yes" and "No" to man at every point, is - so far and in this sense - an adequate expression of the Christian perspective.

b. Experiential.

The other aspect of this double question involved in a "validation" of Christian truth concerns what is true. The more specific issue, in terms of the argument between thomism and dialectic on historical interpretation, is the extent to which life can be fulfilled in history. Maritain believes it can be essentially fulfilled. Niebuhr believes that it can and yet cannot be fulfilled.

At the risk of appearing naive - in reducing heretofore complicated and extended argument to the utmost simplicity and brevity - I should like to suggest it is quite obvious that life does not and cannot, in history, escape either finiteness (which both admit) or sin as serious contradiction of the divine will (which Maritain denies). One steady look, first at myself, then at my friends, the nations, western civilization, the churches, is sufficient, for me, to establish that. I really cannot imagine how any other view can be regarded as remotely plausible. But perhaps I speak as "natural" man and not with the perspective of "redeemed" man.

3. The task of the new synthesis.

If, however, I am correct in thinking the Christian interpretation of history is that every moment of existence stands in, and yet under, God - in the full amplitude and profundity of those words;

and if, furthermore, that interpretation of history is true, certain vital implications seem to me to follow - both about the general relation of religion to culture, and about this issue in the world today.

It is, to begin with, clear that such an interpretation of history affords a basis for cultural elaboration. If it is true that every moment of existence is rooted in¹ God, then history must be regarded as a compound of religion and culture, wherein religion is concerned with the meaning of life and culture with forms of its expression. This obviously contradicts those who make religion itself a form of culture and try to restrict it to churchly activity. Religion is not an isolated realm of esoteric discipline, but the dimension of depth in all experience; and there are not two histories, one~~s~~ sacred and the other secular, but one history in which all cultural forms - intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, ecclesiastical - are equally significant religiously. Thus, God immanent as truth is the power of being or the essential content of thought; God immanent as beauty the content of art; God immanent as good the content of human relations; God immanent in the fullness of His being the content of the church. In the intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical realms of experience, God - though indubitably present - may or may not be consciously regarded. What distinguishes the ecclesiastical, as an order of culture, is simply that there God is explicitly recognized as God, and there is sought, received, and adored.

1 For similar views, see Paul Tillich's The Religious Situation, T.S. Eliot's Notes towards the Definition of Culture, and Christopher Dawson's Religion and Culture.

But it is equally clear that such an interpretation of history provides also a basis for criticism upon cultural elaboration. For, when Christianity declares that every moment of existence stands under God, it is saying that God is more than man as creature and different from man as sinner; it is pointing to God as ultimate Being and Meaning above all cultural forms. Thus, God transcendent as truth becomes the basis of criticism upon thought, even as also He, transcendent as beauty, the good, and in the fulness of His being, becomes the basis of criticism upon the other realms of culture. From such a perspective, idolatrous claims in behalf of any human enterprise can be exposed; for it is understood, in principle at least, that both the incompleteness which marks and the sin which disfigures all things human must be resolved at the last by God's sovereign power and purpose.

I venture to suggest that it is only by recognizing this dialectical relation of Christianity and culture that the world can find the health it now desperately but abortively seeks.

The thomist synthesis of medieval Christendom broke down primarily because it partially misconstrued both the justificationist and the sanctificationist side of the biblical paradox of grace. The Renaissance distilled from the old synthesis the sanctificationist side, and the Reformation the justificationist side, of the paradox. And although each discerned possibilities beyond the scope of the old synthesis, the price has been cultural chaos and an ever-growing separation of form from content. We require, therefore, a new synthesis which will unite Christianity and culture once more in terms of the two

aspects of grace, but in a way that gives full emphasis to both aspects. Such a synthesis cannot be, as Maritain and the thomists imagine, a rational synthesis. It can only be a dialectical synthesis, which at once synthesises and recognizes that synthesis is finally beyond the range of human powers.

The need for such a dialectical synthesis is discerned by
¹ many. Its principles have been sketched already by some. Niebuhr himself has, one might say, elaborated the relation of the Christian faith to the ethical realm of culture maximally, to the intellectual realm partially, to the ecclesiastical realm minimally, and to the
² aesthetic realm not at all. It is only too apparent, however, that, whatever the strength of contemporary thinkers and leaders, the construction of the new synthesis must await the historically propitious moment - the fullness of time, as it were. Meanwhile, we can~~only~~ work toward its realization, preparing the way.

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- 1 See, for instance, John Baillie's What is Christian Civilization? for one of the most recent, penetrating, and balanced analyses of the relation of Christianity to civilization.
 - 2 It has recently struck me how little concern has been shown by Protestant theologians - particularly those largely influenced by the Reformation - for the aesthetic realm of culture. It is therefore gratifying to see that Brunner, in his recently published first volume of Gifford lectures, Christianity and Civilization, devotes the last chapter to the problem.

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